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Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance**

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the interim report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Ahmed Shaheed, submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 71/196.

* A/72/150.
** The present report was submitted after the deadline to reflect the most recent developments.

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Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

Summary

The present report by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Ahmed Shaheed, provides an overview of his mandated activities since he officially took office in November 2016.

The Special Rapporteur reports on the increase in religious intolerance worldwide and discusses the gap between international commitments to combat intolerant acts and national practices. He encourages States to make greater use of existing United Nations mechanisms to combat religious intolerance and concludes with recommendations that States, faith leaders, civil society and the media should consider in promoting and protecting freedom of religion or belief.

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I. Activities of the Special Rapporteur

1. The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Ahmed Shaheed, was appointed by the Human Rights Council during its thirty-first session, in March 2016, and assumed his mandate on 1 November 2016. The Rapporteur's activities up to 31 July 2017 included sending out 38 communications to 24 States and others and interacting with various stakeholders in Beirut, Brussels, Dublin, Geneva, London, Montreal, New York, Ottawa and Washington, D.C.

2. The Special Rapporteur presented his annual report (A/HRC/34/50) to the Human Rights Council at its thirty-fourth session, held in March 2017, and participated in side events and bilateral meetings. He subsequently undertook a country visit to Albania, from 8 to 17 May 2017. He will present the report on that mission to the Council at its thirty-seventh session, in March 2018.

II. Introduction

3. Acts of intolerance, on the basis or in the name of religion or belief, are prevalent globally. States continue to apply discriminatory laws and policies on those grounds and are responsible for effectuating practices that violate the right to freedom of religion or belief and other interrelated rights. Non-State actors in a number of regions, especially armed groups classified as terrorist organizations, continue to engage in violence, atrocities and hate crimes,[1] often in the name of religion, against minorities and their places of worship. Mob violence, often driven and justified by religious and sectarian divisions and hatred, is frequently being used as a means of enforcing religious or social norms.

4. Verbalized expressions of hatred, facilitated by social media and information technology, which play an ever-important role in providing a platform for the voices of stigmatization and negative stereotyping, are further exacerbating the climate of intolerance. At the same time, there are increasing trends towards politicizing and securitizing religion or belief. Governments, officials and politicians are increasingly promoting identity politics to stir up public anxieties, often under the guise of public order or safety. The Special Rapporteur further notes that although violent extremism perpetrated by non-State actors, often in the name of religion or belief, is a real threat that must be confronted, what is often overlooked is the role many governments play in exacerbating, fuelling and enabling an environment in which such extremism can flourish.

5. The climate of intolerance driven by rising xenophobia and nativism against those perceived to be different or foreign is also increasingly desensitizing the general public against incitement to discrimination or violence and other dangerous practices, such as stereotyping and stigmatization based on religion or belief or other characteristics. These phenomena can lead to alienation and victimization of individuals in vulnerable situations, including those belonging to religious minorities.

6. Combating discrimination and other forms of intolerance against persons based on religion or belief has been a primary objective for the international community since the inception of the United Nations, but the path towards developing and implementing a clear and sustainable plan for countering this phenomenon since then has been challenging. The General Assembly took its first steps to respond to the plight of victims of discrimination or violence based on religion in 1946, when it gave the Commission on Human Rights a mandate to advance efforts to prevent

[1] "Hate crimes" refers to crimes motivated by animus towards individuals based on colour, nationality, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation/gender identity or other status.

discrimination on grounds of race, sex, language or religion and to protect minorities. Thirty-five years later, the General Assembly, in its resolution 35/55, adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (1981 Declaration) and established a corresponding special procedure to monitor and report on its implementation.

7. The concept of intolerance against persons based on their religion or belief has not been specifically defined in international human rights law, but it has been repeatedly identified as a causal or correlative factor constituting an obstacle to the full enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion or belief. Article 2 (2) of the 1981 Declaration, for example, seems to conflate the concept of intolerance with discrimination, stating that "intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief" means any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on religion or belief and having as its purpose or as its effect nullification or impairment of the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis". However, elsewhere in the 1981 Declaration, the General Assembly clearly distinguishes between "intolerance" and "discrimination", for example by expressing concern at manifestations of intolerance and at the existence of discrimination in matters of religion or belief.[2] In this way, the 1981 Declaration establishes a critical link between various manifestations of religious intolerance and their negative impact on respect for the right to freedom of religion or belief, which is contingent on respect for the principles of equality and non-discrimination to allow for the full enjoyment of this and other fundamental rights and freedoms.

8. It has since been further articulated that "intolerance based on religion or belief has two separate aspects: first, an unfavourable attitude of mind towards persons or groups of a different religion or belief, and secondly, manifestations of such an attitude in practice". These manifestations often take the form of discrimination. In other cases, they can involve the stirring up of hatred against, or even the persecution of, individuals or groups of a different religion or belief (see E/CN.4/Sub.2/1987/26, para. 15).

9. In recent years, the international community has increasingly focused on manifestations of intolerance involving religion or belief, including discrimination, hostility or violence, resulting in a number of key developments. This includes the adoption by the Human Rights Council in 2011 of resolution 16/18 on combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons based on religion or belief and the formulation in 2012 of the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence (see A/HRC/22/17/Add.4, appendix). Yet despite these and other United Nations efforts to strengthen international protection for freedom of religion or belief, acts of intolerance have been on the rise in many parts of the world, revealing an alarming gap between international norms and domestic practice.

10. Available data suggest that the median level of government restrictions on religion or belief increased from 2014 to 2015 in four of the five United Nations regional groups (the African, Asia-Pacific, Eastern European, and Western European and others groups).[3] Countries in the Middle East and North Africa reportedly

[2] See resolution 36/55, eighth preambular paragraph, and Heiner Bielefeldt, Nazila Ghanea and Michael Wiener, *Freedom of Religion or Belief: An International Law Commentary* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 330.

[3] Pew Research Center, "Global restrictions on religion rise modestly in 2015, reversing downward trend" (Washington, D.C., 11 April 2017). The Special Rapporteur relies on Pew data only insofar as it provides useful and relevant information on issues related to religious intolerance worldwide. These references are not, in any way, a reflection of his endorsement of the methodology used by Pew to identify national or territorial boundaries, or his position on what the international political status of those entities should be.

experienced the largest increase in both government restrictions and social hostility levels involving religion or belief for the past eight years. Mass atrocity crimes have threatened the very existence of the Yazidis and ancient Christian communities in that region, as is the case with the Rohingya in the wider Asia-Pacific region. Ahmadis, Baha'i, Christians, Shia and other religious minorities also faced discriminatory acts and social hostilities in the Middle East and North Africa and in the wider Asia-Pacific region.

11. Social hostilities involving religion or belief in Europe also increased considerably during that period. The number of countries in which Muslims faced such hostility, for example, rose sharply, to 32 (71 per cent) in 2015, up from 26 (58 per cent) the previous year.[4] Spates of hate crimes against Jews remained commonplace in Europe, with 73 per cent of countries reportedly experiencing such incidents. This includes some 1,615 crimes (384 violent attacks, 37 threats and 1,194 crimes against property) reported across countries represented in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.[5] Social hostility towards Christians in Europe also spread from 17 countries (38 per cent) in 2014 to 21 countries (47 per cent) in 2015.[4]

12. Incidents of hostility against adherents from other faith or belief communities also increased globally that year. Hindus, for example, were reportedly harassed in 18 countries in 2015, up from 14 in 2014, while religiously unaffiliated people — including atheists, agnostics and those who do not identify with any religion — were harassed in 14 countries in 2015, up from 4 the previous year.[4]

13. Taken together, the 1981 Declaration, along with the United Nations resolutions and plans of action adopted subsequently, constitute a cogent strategy for responding to the interdependent issues of intolerance based on religion or belief and religious freedom. The Special Rapporteur believes, however, that addressing the so-called implementation gap that emanates from the disparity between standards and commitments set out by those declarations and resolutions, and the action — or inaction — of States to uphold them in practice, is central and critical to promoting and protecting the right to freedom of religion or belief.

14. In the light of current global trends, it is hoped that the present report will stimulate the constructive engagement of the international community with existing United Nations tools and mechanisms with a view to narrowing the gap between commitment and action for the full realization of the right to freedom of religion or belief. These tools include Human Rights Council resolution 16/18 and its accompanying Istanbul Process for Combating Intolerance, Discrimination and Incitement to Hatred and/or Violence on the Basis of Religion or Belief, the Rabat Plan of Action and such monitoring and reporting mechanisms as the special procedures, treaty bodies, especially the Human Rights Committee, and the universal periodic review, which are mandated to engage with national, regional and international commitments to effect change.

15. The desire to enjoy the right to freedom of religion or belief has "already proved itself to be one of the most potent and contagious political forces the world has ever known. But its full realization can come about only when the oppressive action by which it has been restricted in many parts of the world is brought to light, studied, understood and curtailed through cooperative policies; and when methods and means appropriate for the enlargement of this vital freedom are put into effect on the international as well as on the national plane" (see E/CN.4/Sub.2/200/Rev.1).

[4] Pew Research Center, "Global restrictions on religion rise modestly in 2015".

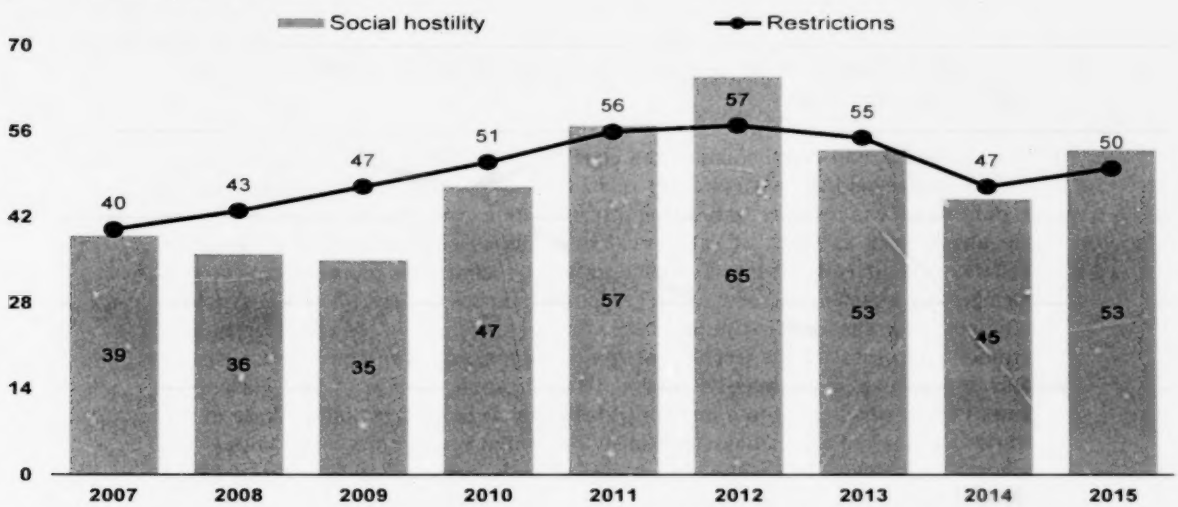
[5] See http://hatecrime.osce.org/what-hate-crime/anti-semitism.

III. General trends and specific manifestations of religious intolerance

16. From 2007 to 2015, roughly one quarter of countries around the globe were affected by significant and unlawful limits on freedom of religion or belief and/or experienced high or very high levels of social hostility involving religion or belief. Today, three quarters of the world's population live in countries that have either restrictions on the right to religion or belief or a high level of social hostility involving religion or belief. Global restrictions on freedom of religion or belief increased in 2015 after a two-year downward trend. Overall, in 2015, nearly 60 per cent of countries experienced increases in government restrictions and social hostilities involving religion or belief (see figure I).[4]

Figure I

Number of countries and territories experiencing social hostility and government restrictions involving religion or belief



Source: Pew Research Center.

17. The available data imply a positive correlation between restrictions on freedom of religion and levels of religious intolerance. The Special Rapporteur notes that while other variables may give rise to upsurges in religious intolerance, increases in unlawful government restrictions against religious groups remain one of the primary and most fundamental factors in the increasing levels of religious intolerance in any given society.

18. Other factors and phenomena accounting for increases in religious intolerance include globalization, which has precipitated pluralism even in societies that have remained isolated for centuries, and growing migration, which has increasingly brought different religious communities into much closer contact. Reportedly, nearly 9 million Christians, about 6 million Muslims and some 3 million Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, adherents of folk religions and individuals who hold no religious affiliation are estimated to have migrated to a new region between 2010 and 2015.[6]

19. State and non-State reactions to the phenomenon of globalization have rendered many societies more vulnerable to tribalism, xenophobia and nativism as

[6] Pew Research Center, "The future of world religions: population growth projections, 2010-2050" (Washington, D.C., April 2015).

individuals search for the visceral safety and comfort that shared national, racial, cultural, religious or nonreligious identities and beliefs ostensibly provide. Those anxieties are further exacerbated by concerns regarding job loss or wage competition and fear that immigrants will undermine the traditional language, religion or way of life of "native" populations, not to mention long-held class and power dynamics. As mentioned previously, such anxieties and hostilities are further exacerbated by governments, officials, politicians and agitators keen to seize on them, often by targeting religious minorities, migrants and others in order to advance their own agendas.

20. In the following subsections, some of the more prevalent and invasive manifestations of intolerance based on religion or belief are presented. These include State discrimination in law or practice; the use of blasphemy, apostasy or anti-conversion laws; unlawful acts by non-State actors (including hate crimes by private citizens or more serious acts, including atrocity crimes, by armed and/or terrorist groups); and increasing trends surrounding the securitization and politicization of religion or belief.

A. Discrimination against persons based on religion or belief, in law and/or in practice

21. Although non-discrimination and equality are at the core of all human rights, various understandings and practices related to religion, particularly when religion is politicized, can result in widespread discrimination. Some forms of discrimination are direct, such as cases of categorical prohibitions on some or all religions or beliefs; explicit calls to ban the immigration or admission of refugees who are members of a particular community group; outright restrictions of certain types of religious observances; prohibitions regarding public displays of certain religious symbols; penalties for the teaching of some religions; bans on conversion (usually affecting joining some religions and not others); and the use of anti-blasphemy laws. People who adhere to a number of religions or beliefs, including those in the Ahmadi, Baha'i, Falun Gong, Humanist, Scientology and Shia communities, the Jehovah's Witnesses and many others, are currently subjected to such direct forms of discrimination in several countries.

22. Other forms of discrimination may be indirect. Examples include laws that appear neutral but have a disproportionate impact on different faith groups, such as zoning laws that prevent the construction of certain types of houses of worship, registration requirements, State requirements for conducting religious services in a particular language or travel bans for immigrants or to resettle refugees from countries where a majority belong to a particular faith community, ostensibly for national security reasons.

23. International law does not recognize or prohibit a specific model for how the relationship between State and religion may be organized. The Special Rapporteur notes, however, that a State's motive for promoting both direct and indirect forms of discrimination is most commonly influenced by the nature of its relationship with a particular religion or religious community. Where a State explicitly associates itself with particular religions or truth claims, unaffiliated groups frequently suffer discrimination.[7] Such discrimination is most injurious where laws and policies are grounded in the imposition of certain theological prescriptions or world views, and especially where glaring democratic deficits and social inequalities along ethnic or religious lines exist.

[7] See A/HRC/19/60, para. 62; A/67/303, para. 47; and A/HRC/34/50, para. 32.

24. Of significant note is the frequency in which a State's adherence to faith-based claims interferes with its capacity to protect the human rights of women. The many religious-based reservations entered by States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women are a case in point.[8] The breadth of restrictions or impositions on women's human rights, including those which limit their full participation in political, social and economic life, leaves States unprepared to promote gender equality and creates an environment in which harmful practices against women can occur. This includes the denial of access to sexual and reproductive health services and the refusal to provide adequate legal and policy safeguards against various forms of gender-based violence, including marital rape.

25. The importance of religion as an identity marker has fanned intolerant attitudes towards various religions or beliefs, encouraging States to favour certain types of values or religious affiliations as essential to the assertion of national status or citizenship. In addition to perpetuating discrimination, such policies and practices politicize religion and have a negative impact on individuals in vulnerable situations, including those belonging to religious minorities and refugees, who already suffer from a high degree of legal, economic and social disenfranchisement.

B. Anti-blasphemy and anti-apostasy laws

26. More than 70 States have anti-blasphemy laws on the books (25 per cent in the Middle East and North Africa, 25 per cent in the Asia-Pacific region, 23 per cent in Europe, 16 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa and 11 per cent in the Americas).[9] Many States have adopted these measures to promote and strengthen "social harmony" and "public order" between and across various communities. By and large, those efforts are effectively measures meant to protect majority religious sentiments or State-imposed religious or belief orthodoxies.

27. Anti-blasphemy, anti-apostasy and anti-conversion laws, some of which are falsely presented as "anti-incitement" legislation, often serve as platforms for enabling incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence against persons based on religion or belief. Such laws also frequently afford varying levels of protection to different religions and are often applied in a discriminatory manner. Those who support criminalizing blasphemy argue that criticism of religion or defamation of religious figures is a variant of hate speech. In reality, however, anti-blasphemy laws are generally focused on the degree to which speech causes offence or outrage to religious sentiments, and not the extent to which that speech undermines the safety and equality of individuals holding those religious views.

28. Anti-blasphemy laws often give States licence to determine which conversations on religion are admissible and which ones are too controversial to be voiced. The Special Rapporteur notes that when governments restrict freedom of expression on the grounds of "insult to religion", any peaceful expression of political or religious views is subject to potential prohibition. In practice, those laws can be used for the suppression of any dissenting view in violation of international human rights standards protecting freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of religion or belief. Consequently, the international community, in several recent action plans, have called upon States that still have blasphemy laws on the books to

[8] See Başak Çalı and Mariana Montoya, *The March of Universality? Religion-Based Reservations to the Core UN Treaties and What They Tell Us About Human Rights and Universality in the 21st Century* (Geneva, Universal Rights Group, 2017).

[9] See Joelle Fiss and Jocelyn Getgen Kestenbaum, "Respecting rights? Measuring the world's blasphemy laws" (Washington, D.C., United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, July 2017), table 2.

repeal them because such laws have a stifling impact on the enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion or belief, not to mention the ability to engage in healthy dialogue and debate about religion.[10]

29. Legislation on religious offences is thus often used to facilitate the persecution of members of religious minority groups, dissenters, atheists and non-theists. In many States, individuals whose beliefs constitute dissent from religious doctrine or beliefs held by the State have been subjected to criminal sanctions, including life imprisonment or capital punishment, under the auspices of "fighting religious intolerance" or "upholding social harmony". Adherents of minority faiths deemed "heretical" by governments or State-backed religious establishments, such as Ahmadis, atheists, Baha'is and various Christian groups, such as the Copts, as well as secular thinkers, remain particularly vulnerable to allegations of blasphemy and apostasy in various parts of the world, including the Middle East, North Africa and South and South-East Asia.

30. Blasphemy allegations are also used by State and non-State actors to disrupt the political status quo and to foment instability by violent extremists who may have an interest in imposing more restrictive interpretations of religion in their societies at the expense of fundamental freedoms. Non-State actors often rely on blasphemy allegations to provoke and mobilize crowds that descend on towns, burn places of worship, loot homes and kill and injure citizens. The Special Rapporteur has issued a number of communications expressing concern in situations where States, on the basis of religious hatred, failed to protect or actively participated in the targeting of individuals engaged in the peaceful exercise of their fundamental rights, including freedom of expression or belief.

31. Human reactions and emotions that were once limited to one's immediate geographic vicinity can in the digital age reach millions in seconds. Since 2012, accusations of online blasphemy have risen, and new patterns of threats and violence have emerged.[11] Individuals using the Internet to disseminate views considered blasphemous are increasingly facing arrest and prosecution. The arrests are often capricious, creating an atmosphere of fear in which Internet users are unsure of the boundaries within which their rights can be exercised. Most alarmingly, online speech, usually expressed through social media sites, can also lead to offline mob violence targeting the alleged "blasphemer".

C. Religious intolerance by non-State actors

32. In many cases, limits on freedom of religion or belief — and denials of that freedom — stem not from any governmental action but from pressure within the society in which they occur. Such pressure is usually exercised through subtle methods, such as exclusion from social life or other forms of social ostracism. A number of incidents of religious intolerance, including discrimination and violence, have occurred in the name of religion or belief, "either with the aim of imposing upon the vanquished the faith of the victor or as a pretext for extending economic or political domination" (E/CN.4/Sub.2/200/Rev.1). This includes acts committed by armed and/or terrorist groups, vigilante mobs, business corporations, civil society

[10] See A/HRC/22/17/Add.4, appendix, para. 25; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "The Beirut Declaration and its 18 commitments on faith for rights" (Geneva, 2017); and United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, "Plan of action of religious leaders and actors to prevent incitement to violence that could lead to atrocity crimes", July 2017.

[11] See Joelle Fiss, "Anti-blasphemy offensives in the digital age: when hardliners take over", Analysis Paper, No. 25 (Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution, September 2016).

organizations and faith-based actors (including family members). The Special Rapporteur notes that under article 2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the State has a duty to protect individuals from rights abuses perpetrated by non-State actors.

33. There have been increasing reports of vigilante mobs perpetrating acts of arson, acid attacks, lynchings, rapes and murders in the name of religion in cases involving allegations of apostasy, blasphemy, heresy, sorcery and homosexuality. The hallmark of many of these attacks is the degree to which "structural violence" and/or overt incitement to discrimination or violence are present as factors. "Structural violence" refers to political, economic and social arrangements that harm individuals or otherwise hinder their access to basic needs but that are often subtle, invisible and not attributable to one specific person or group of people.[12] Such violence, in the form of discrimination and marginalization of minority communities, exposes such communities to victimization and predisposes law enforcement authorities to be capricious in their application of the rule of law.

34. State authorities have a duty to protect individuals and groups against discrimination and other acts that violate the rights of persons based on their religion or belief. There is an emerging consensus that non-State actors, especially in situations where armed and/or terrorist groups exercise effective control over a territory or a population, are also obligated to comply with human rights principles and standards. United Nations human rights bodies, agencies, mechanisms and offices, including commissions of inquiry and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), have addressed human rights violations committed in the name of religion by Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, Hamas, Hizbullah, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, the Lord's Resistance Army and the Taliban (see A/HRC/28/66, paras. 54 and 55). Groups targeted include atheists, Copts, Jews, Shia and Yazidi, as well as bloggers and dissenters, women and girls and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. Where these violations occur in the context of armed conflict, they may also amount to war crimes and other breaches of international humanitarian law. Furthermore, certain acts committed by non-State actors may amount to "international crimes" and trigger individual responsibility under the principles of international criminal law.

35. While civil society actors, including faith-based organizations, often play a crucial role in countering hatred, some have also been responsible for hate speech that contributes to stigmatizing particular communities and generating a climate of fear, discrimination and violence. Hateful discourses frequently target dissenters within established or minority religious communities. Violations carried out by individuals may range from harassment in public places to acts of terrorism. These acts may be motivated or justified by religious beliefs, as in the case of numerous terrorist attacks carried out in the name of religion in recent years or because of the presumed faith identity of the victims.

36. Most violations carried out in the name of religion by family members are gender based. Examples include honour killings, female genital mutilation, corporal punishment, early and forced marriage, marital rape and other forms of domestic violence, sati and coercive practices related to sexual or gender identity, education, dress, employment, freedom of movement, freedom of association, freedom of assembly and recreation. Most of those crimes are likely to go unreported and undocumented. An environment characterized by intolerance and capricious rule of law often facilitates or enables the commission of such rights violations. Intolerant environments may be fed by religious privilege shaped by violent extremist

[12] Johan Galtung, "Violence, peace, and peace research", *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 69, No. 3 (1969).

interpretations of religious sources or by an ideological commitment to impose a particular world view. Such violations are most often aggravated in situations, including conflict situations, where the level of intolerance is at its highest, rule of law is at its weakest and fear is the common currency.

37. Non-State actors such as business entities are not immune to this trend. They can, and have, claimed a supposed "right" to discriminate by refusing to provide services to persons, including women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and members of minority religious communities, on the basis of religious objections. This discrimination can take many forms, including refusal to hire or promote individuals who do not adhere to a particular faith, requiring selective background checks for those suspected of belonging to a particular faith, refusal to provide insurance coverage for contraception for employees or refusal of services altogether.

D. Securitization of religion or belief

38. The securitization of religion or belief is largely a State response to countering violence in the name of religion. Non-State actors who use violence in the name of religion have been responsible for some of the most egregious human rights violations, including killing, torture, enslavement and trafficking, rape and other sexual abuse amounting to crimes against humanity and genocide (see A/HRC/32/CRP.2). Undoubtedly, States must be empowered to carry out their obligations to counter terrorism and violent extremism. Yet an overly securitized approach to countering violent extremism in the name of religion has often proven to be counterproductive and has led to increased levels of religious intolerance.

39. In his report to the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur briefly addressed the issue of securitization of religion as a troubling phenomenon that has played an increasing role in the restriction of the right to religion or belief. He noted that the phenomenon, which is "largely a State response to countering violence in the name of religion, further compounds the corrosive conditions that already undermine the right to freedom of religion or belief" and will require close scrutiny (A/HRC/34/50, para. 37).

40. What is clear, therefore, is that the State response to violent extremism in the name of religion cannot rely solely on a securitization model that is dependent on brute force, or one that treats security and the respect for human rights as a zero-sum game. As the Special Rapporteur noted, "while the quest for security and efforts to promote human rights are often seen as conflicting priorities, the failure to reconcile and resolve such tensions might actually make communities less secure" (ibid., para. 55). This phenomenon has been acknowledged in pillar IV of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and referred to repeatedly by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism.

41. It is important to note that both members of religious minority groups and religious majority communities may become victims of heavy-handed securitization schemes that continue to be employed by States in several regions, including East Asia, Central Asia and parts of the former Soviet Union. Over the past few years there has been a sharp increase in the number of experts in the area of preventing or countering violent extremism, linked to a growing cottage industry surrounding the design and implementation of such programmes, with several countries in North America and Western Europe taking the lead.

42. While the Special Rapporteur is keen to engage with other United Nations rights mechanisms and governments to better understand the design and

implementation of programmes on preventing or countering violent extremism, he notes that such programmes must be designed, implemented and promoted so as to avoid any direct or incidental effects that would result in the weakening of the enjoyment of fundamental rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief. Similarly, governments should do their utmost to ensure that programmes implemented in the name of protecting national security are not, in fact, targeting, stigmatizing or profiling particular religious or belief communities and that they do not have a disproportionate and negative impact on them (see A/HRC/33/29, paras. 31, 45 and 64). The Special Rapporteur also notes, without prejudice, that some human rights groups have expressed serious concerns regarding the lack of transparency surrounding the nature of many programmes on preventing or countering violent extremism, including some of the more well-known ones endorsed and promoted by governments in North America and Western Europe, and have documented violations of the right to non-discrimination, expression, thought and conscience, privacy, education and religion.

E. Politicization of religion or belief

43. The politicization of the right to freedom of religion or belief can aggravate existing tensions within civil society communities and between those actors and the State and can increase the risk of intolerance and incitement to violence and discrimination based on religion. Politicization of religion refers to its instrumentalization, the use of "religion as a means of shaping and reinforcing narrow concepts of national identity, tapping into feelings of religious belonging for the purposes of strengthening political loyalty". It can involve any religion and can occur in countries that have adopted an official State religion and those that are formally secular. In many of those situations "religion has been harnessed to promote national unity and societal homogeneity through the invocation of one predominant cultural and/or religious legacy to which all citizens are supposed to relate in a positive manner" (see A/HRC/25/58, para. 27).

44. Indeed, the previous Special Rapporteur, Heiner Bielefeldt, had analysed the root causes of religious hatred and, in particular, the political factors that contribute to the phenomenon: the manifestation of populist discourses, the politics of fear and aggravating political circumstances, such as endemic corruption, political authoritarianism and the harnessing of religion for narrow identity politics. Such negative factors can lead to a "vicious cycle of mistrust, narrow-mindedness, hysteria, scapegoating and rumours that arouse contempt against certain religious or belief groups", from which no region is immune (ibid., para. 28).

45. The Special Rapporteur echoes his predecessor's recommendation that "political and religious leaders, as well as civil society organizations, should actively support and encourage an atmosphere of religious tolerance and help to build societal resilience against manifestations of religious hatred". Pursuant to the Rabat Plan of Action, these important actors and stakeholders "should refrain from using messages of intolerance or expressions which may incite to religious violence and manifestations of collective religious hatred", and "speak[ing] out firmly and promptly against intolerance, discriminatory stereotyping and instances of hate speech" (ibid., para. 62).

IV. International legal framework and tools to combat religious intolerance

A. International legal framework

46. Freedom of religion or belief is interwoven with the core principles of equality, non-discrimination and non-coercion[13] and overlaps with other rights, including the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, peaceful assembly and association, and education. It must, therefore, be understood in the context of articles 18 to 20 and be read together with core principles enunciated by articles 2 and 5 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. An abuse of one right can be an obstacle to the enjoyment of all the others. It is also clear that the right to freedom of religion or belief does not give the individual — as a rights holder — the power to marginalize, suppress or carry out violent acts against other individuals. As stated in article 5 (1) of the Covenant, no State, group or person has the right "to engage in any activity or perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms recognized" in the Covenant. This is especially applicable with regard to individuals in vulnerable situations, such as women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex persons, under the guise of manifesting their religion or protecting the "moral high ground". Furthermore, criticism of religion, religious leaders or doctrine is not a violation of the right to freedom of religion or belief.

47. Limitations to the right to manifest freedom of religion or belief can be applied only in exceptionally rare cases, and States can never, under any circumstances, restrict the right to have or adopt a religion or belief. The rare exceptions, as defined in article 18 (3) of the Covenant, are "subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others". None of those limitations can be applied for discriminatory purposes or in a discriminatory manner.

48. Similarly, the right to freedom of expression can be limited only to protect other rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief, in very narrow circumstances. The Human Rights Committee, which monitors the implementation of the Covenant, has clarified in its general comment 34 (2011) (CCPR/C/GC/34) that in meeting their specific obligation to prohibit speech that advocates religious hatred constituting incitement (as outlined in article 20 (2)), States must also comply with the general criteria outlined in article 19 (3) for all speech restrictions. That article requires in part that any such limitations be prescribed by law, undertaken for a legitimate aim and necessary to achieve that aim.

49. Article 20 (2) is "premised on a triangular relationship between inciter, audience and target group". The article is, therefore, less concerned about the relationship between offender and offended, or the direct harm extreme speech (in and of itself) may cause to the targeted individual or group. Rather, "its prime concern lies in the harm a third party, the extreme speech's audience, may do to that group". Accordingly, the applicability of article 20 (2) requires that: (a) an inciter publicly addresses an audience; (b) the content of the inciter's speech targets a group on the basis of its religious (or racial or national) characteristics; and (c) the content of the speech will in all likelihood incite the audience to commit acts of violence (or discrimination or hostility) against the target group.[14] It should be noted, however,

[13] See Nazila Ghanea, "Religion, equality and non-discrimination", in John Witte, Jr. and M. Christian Green, eds., *Religion and Human Rights* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011).

[14] Jeroen Temperman, *Religious Hatred and International Law: The Prohibition of Incitement to Violence or Discrimination* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015), chap. 7.4.

that "since not all types of inflammatory, hateful or offensive speech amount to incitement, the two should not be conflated" (see A/67/357, para. 49).

50. That being said, intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization — particularly when advocated by those with a bully pulpit and a cheering crowd — all contribute to an environment rife with violations of manifold rights, including freedom of religion or belief. Yet not all speech leads to violence. Indeed, policing language and resorting to criminal sanctions does little to eliminate intolerant attitudes. States should, therefore, consider the whole range of possible responses, between criminal sanctions on one end of the spectrum and, on the other, the promotion of more speech, including civil penalties and non-legal policy measures that will bring about deep societal changes that challenge stereotyping and stigmatization.

51. Bearing this in mind, the United Nations has adopted several tools for promoting the right to freedom of religion or belief by way of combating various forms of intolerance perpetrated against persons on the basis of their religion or belief. This includes Human Rights Council resolution 16/18 and its implementation mechanism, the Istanbul Process, and the Rabat Plan of Action. Those tools provide a common platform from which Member States may address domestic concerns and common challenges related to religious and other forms of intolerance despite diverse geographic, legal and political contexts, and offer more concrete means for translating into domestic practice protections offered by articles 18 to 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (see, e.g., Human Rights Council resolution 34/22, para. 14).

B. Resolution 16/18 and the Istanbul Process

52. The question of just how much protection should be afforded to the right to freedom of expression remains a divisive issue for stakeholders working to combat the advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred constituting incitement to hostility, discrimination or violence. In its resolution 16/18, the Human Rights Council bridges the ideological divisions surrounding the question of how to effectively address intolerance based on religion or belief while ensuring that the actions of State and non-State actors do not impede the right to freedom of opinion or expression. The Special Rapporteur joins the chorus of stakeholders in calling upon Member States to avoid relitigating concepts that inspire and inform the content and spirit of the resolution. To ensure that their intergovernmental efforts remain relevant and to keep the hard-won agreement alive, Member States should collectively focus on the next step of their commitment: how to implement resolution 16/18.

53. Taken together, measures offered by the resolution constitute an action plan that encourage the creation of intra-State mechanisms that emphasize implementation through predominantly positive State measures. Duty bearers are committed to speaking out against manifestations of intolerance and to providing local authorities, who are on the front lines in promoting and protecting rights, with the expertise, capacity and resources needed to effectively address incidents of intolerance based on religion or belief. This includes facilitating the training of State officials in effective strategies for outreach, identifying and addressing potential areas of tension between members of different religious communities and assisting with conflict prevention and mediation. The plan also articulates the role that change agents (i.e. faith leaders, media outlets, civil society and educators) must play in combating intolerance based on religion or belief.

54. The Istanbul Process, which is intended to be supplemented by regular reporting through OHCHR, contributes to the implementation of resolution 16/18 by

facilitating State-to-State dialogue and the sharing of experiences on best practices and lessons learned from implementing the action plan set out in paragraphs 5 and 6 of the resolution. The process focuses on novel, constructive and context-based approaches to combating religious intolerance, including advocacy of religious hatred constituting incitement. In this regard, approaches that support data-driven analysis and qualitative information and illustrate the impact of national initiatives and mechanisms aimed at combating religious intolerance are absolutely essential.

55. The full potential of the Istanbul Process remains untapped. To date, six conferences have been held in various countries since the adoption of resolution 16/18, and the Special Rapporteur regrets that there is no clarity as to when and where the seventh meeting will be convened. The formats, contexts, participants and agendas for the meetings have varied widely. Some have served as opportunities for sharing success stories and generating recommendations for achieving the goals expressed in the resolution, while others have been criticized for lacking inclusivity, failing to comprehensively examine various parts of the resolution or re-engaging in polarizing debates.

C. Rabat Plan of Action

56. The Special Rapporteur confirms his support for the Rabat Plan of Action, endorsed by his predecessor in his 2013 report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/25/58). The Plan of Action provides a framework for understanding the obligation under article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to prohibit the advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence and offers a road map for its implementation in line with international human rights standards. It emphasizes the interdependence of human rights and recognizes the critical role they play in shaping an environment in which "constructive discussion about religious matters could be held", and notes that open debate and dialogue are "the soundest way to probe whether religious interpretations adhere to or distort the original values that underpin religious belief". The Plan of Action offers guidance on the implementation of legislation, jurisprudence and policies intended to combat advocacy of hatred that constitutes incitement and provides recommendations for policies that foster space for free and open discussions, promote respect for diversity and contribute to inclusion.

57. With respect to government policies, it is recommended in the Rabat Plan of Action that States encourage pluralism so that all communities are granted opportunities to make meaningful contributions to national discussions and to shaping responsive strategies for combating intolerance that may constitute incitement within various societies. States are also called upon to sensitize law enforcement officials to issues related to the prohibition of incitement to hatred, and several recommendations that stakeholders, including civil society organizations, establish mechanisms and dialogues that "foster intercultural and interreligious understanding and learning" are outlined.

58. In terms of legislation, States are encouraged in the Rabat Plan of Action to define incitement to hatred narrowly, recalling that "the broader the definition of incitement to hatred is in domestic legislation, the more it opens the door for arbitrary application of the laws". The permissibility of restrictions on freedom of expression is measured by the three-part test of legality, proportionality and necessity. For the development of jurisprudence, the Plan of Action offers six factors for national courts to consider when assessing whether a specific instance of speech should be restricted or punished as incitement: the context, the speaker, the

intent, the content and form, the extent of the speech act and the likelihood, or imminence of inciting hatred.

59. This comprehensive toolbox forms a complementary and cohesive global strategy for combating the advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred constituting incitement to hostility, discrimination or violence. It provides the space for States to adapt recommendations to local contexts and needs, while adhering to universally applicable human rights standards.

D. New tools and processes

60. The Special Rapporteur notes that the Beirut Declaration and its 18 commitments on "Faith for Rights", launched in March 2017, and the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes (Fez Plan of Action), launched in July 2017, are also important opportunities for advancing respect for freedom of religion and societal tolerance. It is imperative, therefore, that States redouble their focus and efforts towards putting those tools to use in the face of the growing threat of religious intolerance.

V. Assessment of implementation through United Nations human rights mechanisms

61. Existing mechanisms for improving accountability and evaluating the impact of initiatives in combating religious hatred and intolerance are either underutilized or lack the necessary resources or mandate to be effective. Human rights mechanisms, such as the special procedures, which are designed to regularly monitor and report on the status of human rights implementation and compliance through, for example, country visits, should be used more. So, too, should other reporting and review mechanisms, such as the treaty bodies, the universal periodic review and OHCHR-facilitated reporting process for the implementation of resolution 16/18.

62. Human rights indicators for assessing the degree to which human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled in the area of combating discrimination and violence against persons based on religion or belief and protecting the right to freedom of religion or belief are lacking and should be developed. Furthermore, accurate data are necessary for combating hate crimes. The need to develop common data standards for the collection of reliable statistics on hate crimes, for example, is crucial to understanding the nature of those offences, supporting the victims and initiating workable policies to prevent future crimes from occurring.

A. Implementation of resolution 16/18

63. Under resolution 16/18, States are required to report on their implementation efforts through OHCHR. State engagement with this implementation mechanism has been quite limited. States have so far submitted information to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly during eight reporting periods, scheduled from December 2011 to March 2017 (see table 1). Just 74 of 193 United Nations Member States, or 38 per cent, reported on their efforts to implement the resolution during these reporting periods.

64. An average of 19, or less than 10 per cent, of the Member States reported on their efforts biannually during the past five and a half years. It should also be noted that an average of 63 per cent of respondents reporting during the seven reporting

cycles following the initial 2011/12 cycle had already reported at least once (with the remaining 37 per cent of respondents reporting for the first time).

Table 1
Number of countries reporting on the implementation of the action plan set out in Human Rights Council resolution 16/18 (by regional group)

	Western European and others group	*Asia-Pacific group*	*African group*	*Eastern European group*	*Latin American and Caribbean group*	*Total respondents*
April 2016-March 2017	5	6	2	1	3	18
October 2015-August 2016	4	5	1	4	4	18
April 2014-January 2015	1	2	0	0	2	15
August 2014-October 2015	2	4	1	4	6	17
March 2013-April 2014	10	5	0	9	0	24
October 2013-August 2014	8	3	0	3	2	16
August 2012-October 2013	9	5	1	6	5	26
December 2011-August 2012	5	5	2	4	5	21

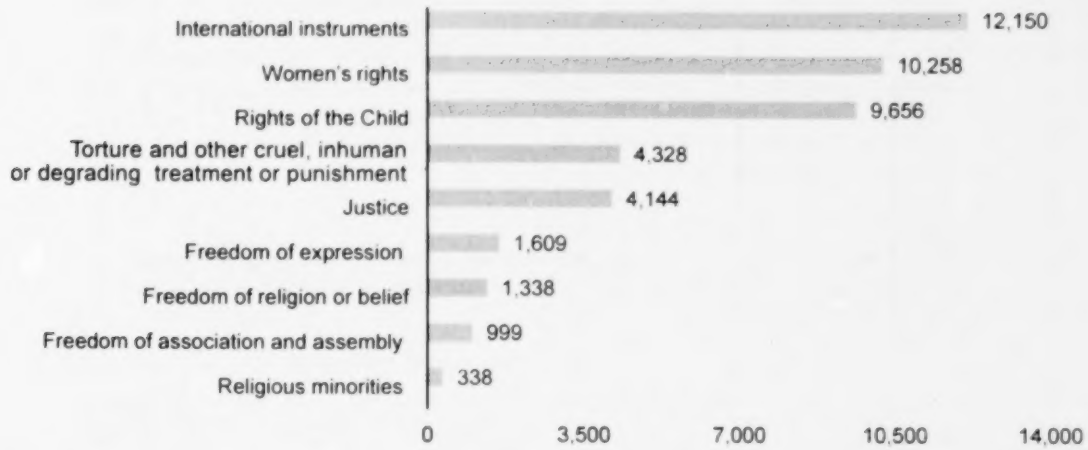
Source: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

65. Overall, a total of just 17 per cent of States from the Western European and others group, 11 per cent of the Eastern European States, 6 per cent of the Latin American and Caribbean States, 5 per cent of Asia-Pacific States and 1 per cent of African States have reported on their efforts to implement resolution 16/18 to date. To the extent that reporting is critical to the success of the resolution, the Special Rapporteur encourages all Member States to increase their efforts to ensure comprehensive and timely reporting. The Special Rapporteur also encourages stakeholders to invite non-State actors to submit information to OHCHR on progress achieved in the implementation of the resolution.

B. Universal periodic review

66. The Special Rapporteur notes that the universal periodic review has been underutilized as a mechanism for promoting the right to freedom of religion or belief (A/HRC/34/50). The top five issues reviewed during the first two universal periodic review cycles represented 73 per cent of the more than 52,000 recommendations offered. These include recommendations for ratifying or fulfilling international instruments, promoting the human rights of women and children, prohibiting torture and improving various aspects of the administration of justice. Recommendations related to the right to freedom of religion or belief constituted less than 3 per cent of recommendations, as did such interrelated rights as the right to freedom of expression and the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly (see figure II). States accepted 843, or 63 per cent, of universal periodic review recommendations involving the right to freedom of religion or belief (which is 10 per cent less than the overall acceptance rate for recommendations related to the top five issues). A total of 63 per cent of universal periodic review recommendations involving the right to religion or belief either addressed manifestations of intolerance and their aggravating factors or encouraged measures for combating various forms of intolerance based on religion or belief (see table 2).

Figure II
Top human rights issues examined under the universal periodic review



Source: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; see upr-info.org.

67. Those recommendations included ones pressing for State actions for combating discrimination, hostility or violence against persons based on religion or belief. Almost a quarter of those recommendations were related to discrimination, including against religious minorities; 5.5 per cent were related to addressing violence or other hate crimes against persons based on religion or belief; and 32 of the 1,338 universal periodic review recommendations raised the need to reform anti-apostasy or anti-blasphemy laws (but only 25 per cent of those specific recommendations were accepted).

Table 2
Recommendations raised during the first and second cycles of the universal periodic review relating to the elimination of various manifestations of intolerance based on religion or belief

Recommendations	*Number*	*Percentage of recommendations on freedom of religion or belief*	*Percentage of recommendations accepted*
On eliminating intolerance (generally)	63	4.7	87
On eliminating discrimination	309	23.0	66
On addressing violence	74	5.5	77
On anti-blasphemy laws	15	1.1	33
On anti-apostasy laws	11	0.8	36
Subtotal, recommendations on intolerant laws and acts	**472**	**35.0**	**69**
Total recommendations on freedom of religion or belief	**1 338**[a]	**100.0**	**63**
Total recommendations made under the universal periodic review	**55 225**	**2.4**	**73**

Source: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; see upr-info.org.
[a] As at the twenty-fifth session of the universal periodic review.

68. The average rate of acceptance for recommendations related to addressing intolerant acts across all five United Nations regional groups was 58 per cent. States in the Latin American and Caribbean group received the lowest number of recommendations and have the second-highest acceptance rate. The Western European and other group received the highest number of recommendations and have the third-highest acceptance rate. States in the Asia-Pacific group received the second-highest number of recommendations but have the lowest acceptance rate. Finally, States in the Eastern European and African groups received the median number of recommendations and had the highest and median acceptance rates, respectively (see table 3).

Table 3
Recommendations raised during the first and second cycles of the universal periodic review on the elimination of discrimination on the basis of religion or belief, by regional group

	Number of recommendations		
Regional group	*Made to other Member States*	*Received from other Member States*	*Percentage of recommendations accepted*
Western European and others	94	137	73
Asia-Pacific	94	94	43
Eastern European	33	47	96
African	33	22	59
Latin American and Caribbean	51	9	78
Observer	4	–	–
Total	**309**	**309**	–

Source: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; see upr-info.org.

69. The rate of acceptance for recommendations related to eliminating violence and combating other hate crimes against persons based on religion or belief was, on average, high. The countries in the Western European and other group and the Asia-Pacific States received the largest number of recommendations, while the Latin American and Caribbean and African States received few if any recommendations related to tackling violence or other hate crimes against persons based on religion or belief (see table 4).

Table 4
Recommendations raised during the first and second cycles of the universal periodic review on combating violence or hate crimes, by regional group

	Number of recommendations		*Percentage of recommendations accepted*	
Regional group	*Made to other Member States*	*Received from other Member States*	*On violence*	*On other hate crimes*
Western European and others	34	41	80	94
Asia-Pacific	28	29	67	50
Eastern European	10	16	89	100
African	14	11	91	–
Latin American and Caribbean	12	2	50	–

Regional group	Number of recommendations: Made to other Member States	Number of recommendations: Received from other Member States	Percentage of recommendations accepted: On violence	Percentage of recommendations accepted: On other hate crimes
Observer	1	–	–	–
Total	**99**	**99**	**–**	**–**

Source: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; see upr-info.org.

70. In almost 30 per cent of the recommendations related to the promotion of freedom of religion or belief, States were called upon to take measures to combat intolerant acts. The preponderance of those recommendations (18 per cent) were aimed at promoting legal and policy approaches to combating intolerant acts. This includes the approximately 6 per cent of recommendations in which strengthening protections for related rights, such as the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association, were called for. Recommendations in support of interfaith dialogues or public awareness initiatives to promote greater tolerance were less numerous, but appear to be most favoured by States under review (see table 5).

Table 5
Specific measures recommended during the first and second cycles of the universal periodic review on combating intolerance based on religion or belief

Recommendations	Number	Percentage of all recommendations on freedom of religion or belief	Percentage of proposed measures that were accepted
For amendments to/or establishment of measures to address manifestations of intolerance (including discrimination)	472	35	69
To strengthen protections for the related right to freedom of expression	83	6.0	57.0
Related to anti-blasphemy and anti-apostasy laws	26	2.0	24.8
For interfaith or intercultural dialogue	96	7.0	94.0
On public awareness initiatives	36	3.0	92.0
Total	**713**	**53.0**	**–**
Total number of recommendations on freedom of religion or belief	**1 338**	**2.4**	**63**

Source: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; see upr-info.org.

71. Recommendations under the universal periodic review for improving the collection of data on incidents of hate crime and other manifestations of intolerance based on religion or belief are negligible or non-existent, as are recommendations for strengthening intra-State processes for monitoring implementation progress or for evaluating the impact of measures aimed at combating discrimination, hostility and violence against persons based on religion or belief. Only two recommendations offered in both universal periodic review cycles concerned strengthening data collection and maintaining disaggregated data to better understand the scale and severity of hate crimes towards persons in vulnerable situations.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

72. Manifestations of religious intolerance, not least those that lead to discrimination and violence, prevent the full realization of the right to freedom of religion or belief. Intolerance based on religion or belief has two separate aspects: (a) an unfavourable attitude of mind towards persons or groups of a different religion or belief; and (b) manifestations of such an attitude in practice. States cannot possibly legislate attitudes and must refrain from attempts to regulate controversial thoughts. Laws and judicial enforcement cannot eradicate religious intolerance and are not sufficient as a stand-alone approach. In fact, tackling manifestations of intolerance, such as discriminatory or violent acts that undermine the fundamental human rights of persons because of the religion or belief to which they may adhere may require both legal solutions and thoughtful, responsive non-legal measures promoted by the State.

73. Authorities must redouble their efforts to restore trust in public State institutions, especially when it comes to upholding freedom of religion or belief. The building of trust requires well-functioning institutions, including an independent judiciary and effective national human rights institutions and human rights monitoring bodies.

74. Furthermore, the gap between commitments to combat intolerant acts and practices and their implementation needs to be addressed through transparent, credible and accountable policies executed at the national and local levels. States must repeal all laws that discriminate on the basis of religion or belief or that undermine the exercise of the right to freedom of religion or belief. Particular attention must be paid to upholding the obligation to protect the rights of members of religious minorities, as well as those of women, children, members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community and others in vulnerable situations, such as migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons.

75. Adequate criminal sanctions penalizing violent and particularly egregious discriminatory acts perpetrated by State or non-State actors against persons based on their religion or belief should be adopted where they do not exist and must be equitably enforced. States should also develop and implement effective preventive strategies to help curb aggravating factors linked to religious intolerance, which can lead to discrimination or violence.

76. However, criminal sanctions to curb incitement to violence, hostility or discrimination must be used as a method of last resort, and only when such sanctions are necessary and proportional to the harm to be avoided. Such laws, in fact, could reinforce religious intolerance, especially where the absence of a robust commitment to pluralism and diversity results in discriminatory State practices that abuse such laws. Furthermore, criticism of religion, religious leaders or doctrine is not a violation of the right to freedom of religion or belief. Advocates of anti-blasphemy laws should note that their application more often than not invites a cycle of hatred and hostility, reinforcing prejudice and triggering a spiral of angry and violent responses. Anti-blasphemy laws have a stifling impact on the enjoyment of the freedom of religion or belief and the freedom of opinion and expression and should be repealed.

77. The enjoyment of the full exercise of the freedom of religion or belief also requires a set of positive policy measures in the areas of education, religious literacy, media, civil society development and State cooperation with religious leaders and communities. A policy of inclusion of all religious and belief groups could go a long way to strengthen pluralism through equal participation in public life of persons holding various beliefs. Minority communities should also embrace, where possible, strategies that build constructive resilience against

intolerance to advance their re-engagement in wider society positively through coexistence, harmony and respect for the rule of law, and to pursue peaceful social change.

78. The Special Rapporteur, therefore, encourages all stakeholders, including States, faith leaders and civil society, to fully utilize the recommendations outlined in resolution 16/18, the Rabat Plan of Action, the Fez Plan of Action and the Beirut Declaration. Religious literacy and interfaith dialogue can play a vital role in identifying the common good and promoting respect for pluralism. As stressed in the Beirut Declaration, all believers — whether theistic, non-theistic, atheistic or other — should join hands and hearts in articulating ways in which "faith" can stand up for "rights" more effectively, so that each enhances the other. Rejecting expressions of hatred within one's own community and extending solidarity and support across faith or belief boundaries are honourable and meaningful actions.

79. Many Member States and other stakeholders agree that United Nations tools developed for combating manifestations of intolerance based on religion or belief have not been used to their fullest potential and that further steps to strengthen international processes for implementation are necessary. In this regard, the Special Rapporteur encourages Member States to improve the capacity of the Istanbul Process to fully function as a mechanism for implementation. To date, the Process has received varied levels of consideration from Member States, depending on evaluations by foreign ministries in national capitals. Deeper and broader commitment could add value.

80. As such, diplomatic officials should work to orient its national experts across a range of ministries and policy fields, such as those in justice, interior, education and social affairs departments, to better operationalize this national engagement with Human Rights Council resolution 16/18. Relatively few States provide detailed information on national steps taken to implement the resolution, and little to no analysis of the impact that national measures and strategies may have had on furthering the goals of resolution 16/18 have been offered in reports to date. The Special Rapporteur recommends that steps be taken to streamline State engagement with the reporting mechanism to improve the consistency and quality of reporting and facilitate impact analysis. It is also strongly recommended that civil society organizations, national human rights institutions and international organizations be allowed to share their experiences, views and best practices in this process (see A/HRC/34/35, para. 117).

81. As a mechanism for implementation, the Istanbul Process should seek to regularize introspective intergovernmental exchanges of experiences, best practices and lessons learned. Meetings should also be held regularly to assess the impact of specific measures and explore the effectiveness of the myriad strategies advanced by States for implementing resolution 16/18. Agendas for a calendar of future meetings should include periodic engagement with the resolution. Meetings should be apolitical and geared towards facilitating peer-to-peer exchanges among an inclusive pool of experts and practitioners — particularly those on the front lines of promoting and protecting rights — including educators, faith leaders, social workers, legal and human rights experts, rights advocates, experts in law enforcement and the media. Moreover, efforts to supplement those discussions with data-driven analysis and qualitative information should be undertaken.

82. As such, the collection of reliable data on hate crimes and statistics, which may speak to the effectiveness of measures taken to combat manifestations of intolerance based on religion or belief, is also crucial. However, the issue of data collection (or the lack thereof) should not be instrumentalized as a political tool and must, instead, represent a commitment by all States to monitor and report

on their obligations to respect, protect and promote the human rights of all those within their jurisdictions. The collection and publication of disaggregated data and statistics on hate crimes should include the number of cases reported to law enforcement and the number of prosecutions and convictions meted out. This information is essential for: (a) understanding the nature of the crimes committed; (b) measuring the effectiveness of initiatives to address hate crimes; (c) supporting the victims; (d) initiating workable policies to prevent future crimes from occurring; and (e) ensuring adequate resource allocation in countering hate-motivated incidents against persons based on religion or belief. Today, a comprehensive database system containing comparable national data is lacking at the United Nations level.

83. Member States should also consider taking steps to strengthen information-sharing and improve the transparency of the various United Nations processes and activities aimed at combating acts of hostility, discrimination and violence for all stakeholders. This could include establishing an "Internet portal" designed to serve as a platform for all stakeholders (i.e. faith-based actors, human rights experts, government officials, national human rights institutions and other practitioners) to access legal, judicial and policy guidance, allow for the sharing of success stories and challenges and enhance the visibility of the work of the United Nations in combating the advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred constituting incitement to hostility, discrimination or violence for broader constituencies. Such a platform could bring together sources of information produced by activities organized in support of the implementation of resolution 16/18 and the Rabat Plan of Action. Information produced by complementary processes, such as those carried out under the Beirut Declaration and the Fez Plan of Action, could also be linked to such a website.

84. The media can play a positive role in bringing about a culture in which pluralism and diversity are celebrated rather than feared. The Special Rapporteur would like to reiterate the call upon the media to develop voluntary guidelines for reporting on religious issues and initiate self-regulatory supervision mechanisms that facilitate the implementation of those guidelines in a manner fully consistent with the right to freedom of opinion and expression. There is also a need for journalists to provide a stage for thinkers who challenge alarmist stereotypes. Voices advocating for positive visions of diversity should be provided with a more visible platform to counter aggressive and sensationalist messages that appear to frequently crowd the headlines, with a view to addressing the imbalance of intolerant voices on social and traditional media platforms and tackling the challenge of promoting civil discourse online and offline.

85. To the extent that the Special Rapporteur serves as the primary focal point within the United Nations human rights system to promote the right to freedom of religion, he is committed to working with other human rights mechanisms within the confines of his mandate to combat the serious issue of intolerance based on religion or belief. As such, the Special Rapporteur endeavours: (a) to contribute to efforts focused on the implementation of measures promoted by the aforementioned legal and policy framework for combating manifestations of intolerance based on religion or belief, as well as those aimed at assessing the impact of such measures; (b) to take a leading role in promoting both legal and non-legal tools, such as resolution 16/18, in an effort to incorporate more comprehensive and flexible approaches to combating religious intolerance that rely on constructive models for promoting cooperation among States; and (c) to engage with and expand the network of actors and stakeholders, including existing regional and national human rights mechanisms and civil society actors.

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Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019

Human resources management

Conditions of service and compensation for officials, other than Secretariat officials, serving the General Assembly: full-time members of the International Civil Service Commission and the Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in paragraph 8 of section III of its resolution 65/268, decided that the conditions of service and compensation, other than the annual net compensation, of the full-time members of the International Civil Service Commission and of the Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions would be reviewed every four years. The previous review took place at the sixty-eighth session of the Assembly.

2. Pursuant to paragraph 9 of section III of that resolution, such reports as the present report are, on an exceptional basis and without setting a precedent for other agenda items, to be submitted directly to the General Assembly.

II. Background

3. In its resolution 35/221, the General Assembly decided that the compensation and other conditions of service of the full-time members of the Commission and of the Chair of the Advisory Committee would be reviewed normally every five years. The last such review was conducted in 2000 at the fifty-fifth session of the Assembly. By its resolution 55/238, the Assembly took note of the relevant report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/55/29), in which the sixtieth session of the Assembly, in 2005, was identified for the next review.

4. Following the review in 2005, the General Assembly, in paragraphs 4 and 5 of its resolution 58/266, requested the Secretary-General to bring the issue of conditions

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of service and compensation of the three officials to the attention of the Assembly when the annual compensation for the Chairs of the Commission and the Advisory Committee fell below the level of the compensation of Assistant Secretaries-General, but no sooner than at its sixty-third session, and decided that that procedure would replace the requirement for future five-year comprehensive reviews outlined in paragraph 8 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/57/35). Subsequently, a report was submitted to the Assembly at its sixty-third session (A/63/354). By its decision 63/550 B, the Assembly decided, however, to defer consideration of the matter to its sixty-fourth session. The same report was therefore submitted to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011, but no action was taken.

5. Subsequently, the General Assembly took up the matter at its sixty-fifth session, in 2011, considering a report on the subject (A/65/676). The Assembly concurred with the recommendations and conclusions of the Advisory Committee, including putting in place an adjustment mechanism for the annual net compensation of the three officials (see A/65/767). In its resolution 65/268, the Assembly decided that the annual net compensation of the three officials should be subject to a cost-of-living adjustment equivalent to the annual change in the midpoint net base salary of the most senior officials in the Secretariat, namely the Under-Secretaries-General and the Assistant Secretaries-General.

6. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/192, the pensionable remuneration of the full-time members of the Commission and of the Chair of the Advisory Committee is also adjusted at the same time and by the same percentage as that used to adjust their annual compensation.

7. The elements of the conditions of service and compensation, other than the annual net compensation (and, by default, the post-retirement benefits), of the three officials are subject to review every four years. The General Assembly reviewed the matter at its sixty-eighth session. By its resolution 68/247, the Assembly took note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/68/187).

8. Accordingly, the Secretary-General wishes to refer to his two previous reports on the matter (A/65/676 and A/68/187) and to update the information provided therein. To facilitate that process, the present report is divided into four sections: compensation (special allowance), other conditions of service, financial implications and the next comprehensive review.

III. Compensation (special allowance)

9. The amount of the special allowance payable to the Chairs of the Commission and the Advisory Committee in recognition of their added responsibilities was last revisited in 2000 and established at $10,000 per annum by the General Assembly in its resolution 55/238. No change to the level of the allowance is proposed at this time.

IV. Other conditions of service

Education grant

10. The General Assembly, in section III of its resolution 70/244, decided that the revised education grant scheme for staff members in the Professional and higher categories would be introduced as of the school year in progress on 1 January 2018. The scheme is to be extended to the full-time members of the Commission and the Chair of the Advisory Committee.

Relocation package

11. The General Assembly, in section III of its resolution 70/244, approved the new relocation package for staff in the Professional and higher categories, effective 1 July 2016, in which, in particular, a settling-in grant was introduced to replace the assignment grant and the full removal entitlement was redefined. This scheme is to be extended to the full-time members of the Commission and the Chair of the Advisory Committee.

12. No change is proposed to the manner of application of other conditions of service of the full-time members of the Commission and of the Chair of the Advisory Committee at this time. Those other entitlements are listed in the annex to the present report.

V. Financial implications

13. The General Assembly, in its resolution 65/268, approved the restoration of the relativity relating to the annual net compensation and the post-retirement benefits of the full-time members of the Commission and of the Chair of the Advisory Committee. The cost-of-living adjustments to the annual net compensation of those three officials are made in accordance with the established mechanism detailed in paragraph 5 above and would therefore be reported in the context of the relevant performance reports to be submitted to the Assembly.

VI. Next comprehensive review

14. In accordance with the decision on this matter taken by the General Assembly in its resolution 65/268, the next comprehensive review will be undertaken at the seventy-sixth session of the Assembly.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

15. **The General Assembly is invited to take note of the present report.**

Annex

Conditions of service and compensation of the full-time members of the International Civil Service Commission and the Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The full-time members of the International Civil Service Commission and the Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions are entitled to the following conditions of service and compensation:

(a) Annual (net) salary of $222,345 (as at June 2017);

(b) For the Chairs of the Commission and the Advisory Committee only: special annual allowance (not subject to interim adjustments based on movements in the cost-of-living index) of $10,000;

(c) Retirement benefits: in accordance with General Assembly resolution 37/131, the officials concerned became participants in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund under supplementary article B of the Regulations of the Fund;

(d) Pensionable remuneration of $286,092 (as at June 2017);

(e) Coverage for illness, injury or death attributable to service with the United Nations under the provisions of the compensation plan initially authorized by the General Assembly in its resolution 458 (V) and the rules promulgated by the Secretary-General governing such compensation, the latest revision of which (ST/SGB/103/Rev.1) was approved by the Assembly in its resolution 34/233;

(f) Subsistence allowance when conducting official business travel away from Headquarters;

(g) The same travel entitlements as apply to other members of the Committee and the Commission, as contained in the rules governing payment of travel expenses and subsistence allowances in respect of members of organs or subsidiary organs of the United Nations (ST/SGB/107/Rev.6), upon appointment and upon end of appointment;

(h) Full removal: subject to applicable administrative issuances, these officials shall be entitled to relocation shipment for full removal of personal effects and household goods by the most economical means, on travel on appointment and on separation from service after completion of two years of continuous service, as follows:

(i) A standard 20-foot container (equivalent to 33.2 cubic metres) for an official without a spouse or dependent child;

(ii) A standard 40-foot container (equivalent to 67.7 cubic metres) for an official with a spouse or dependent child residing at the official duty station;

(i) Education grant: in paragraph 2 of its resolution 40/256, the General Assembly approved the recommendation of the Advisory Committee in paragraph 11 of its report (A/39/7/Add.1), thereby entitling the full-time members of the Commission and the Chair of the Advisory Committee to the reimbursement of the actual cost of educating their eligible dependent children, subject to specialized conditions and the same ceilings applicable to the education grant for eligible staff in the Professional and higher categories, and the payment of travel expenses for one round-trip journey per year per child from the place of scholastic attendance outside the United States of America to New York. Details on the revised education

grant scheme to be extended to the full-time members of the Commission and the Chair of the Advisory Committee as of the school year in progress on 1 January 2018 are provided in the report of the Commission (see A/70/30, paras. 109-118);

(j) Settling-in grant: upon arrival at the duty station, these officials will receive a settling-in grant amounting to 30 days of subsistence allowance at the daily rate in effect at the duty station on the date of arrival in respect of the official, and at half the daily rate in respect of each eligible family member for whom the official had an entitlement to travel expenses to the duty station at the time of initial appointment. In addition, the officials will receive a lump-sum payment of one month's net salary;

(k) Home leave, in accordance with rule 5.2 of the Staff Rules: the United Nations defrays the costs for travel to the home country for a specified number of occasions during a four-year term of office;

(l) Compensation to survivors in the event of death during service (comprising a lump sum equivalent to one month of the annual compensation of the official per year of service, subject to a minimum of three months and a maximum of nine months);

(m) Option to join the Headquarters medical insurance scheme upon payment of the full cost of the premium.

2. The full-time members of the Commission and the Chair of the Advisory Committee are not entitled to the following:

(a) Dependency allowance;

(b) Rental subsidy;

(c) Representation allowance;

(d) Commutation of accrued annual leave upon separation;

(e) Repatriation grant.

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Item 137 of the provisional agenda*
Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019

Proposal for the renovation of the North Building at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report sets out the proposal of the Secretary-General to start the implementation of the project for the renovation of the North Building at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago, which was one of the near-term major construction projects identified in the report of the Secretary-General on the strategic capital review (A/70/697) and the preceding report (A/69/760).

The report provides a summary of the outcomes of the feasibility study undertaken in the 2016-2017 biennium, which included two possible options for implementing the project, intended to meet the global objectives for capital improvements as established under the strategic capital review.

Of the two options studied, the Secretary-General recommends option 1, which entails the renovation of the North Building in one phase, utilizing on-site swing space. The total cost of the project, to be undertaken from 2018 to 2023 (a project duration of six years), is estimated at $14,118,000 at current rates, inclusive of escalation and contingency. In addition to being the most cost-effective option in terms of one-time capital costs, option 1 would enable the Organization to avoid additional long-term operational and maintenance costs that would arise if the renovation project were not undertaken. Option 1 has the added benefit of carrying the lowest risk and providing additional long-term efficiencies in energy and space utilization.

It is recommended that the General Assembly approve the proposed scope, cost and implementation strategy for the implementation of the project; approve the establishment of three positions related to the dedicated project management team

* A/72/150.

** The present report was submitted late owing to the need for extensive internal consultations on a new and complex construction project.

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and project support staff; appropriate an amount of $192,000 for the project in 2018 under the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019; and approve the establishment of a multi-year construction-in-progress account for this project.

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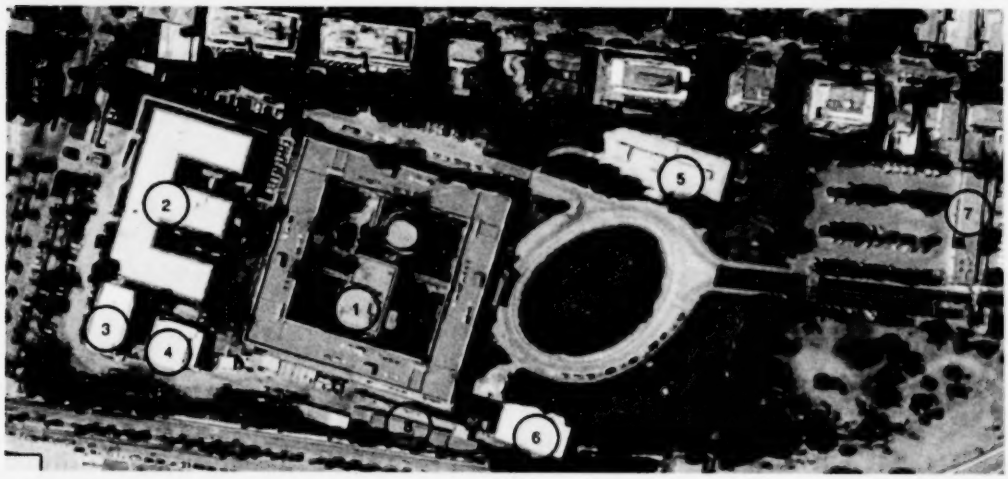
I. Background

1. The headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was established in Santiago in 1965. ECLAC is one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations, founded with the purpose of contributing to the economic development of Latin America and the Caribbean, coordinating actions directed towards that end, and reinforcing economic ties among countries and with other nations of the world. The promotion of the region's social development was later included among its primary objectives. Its main building, conceived and built in the 1960s, is considered an emblematic landmark of modern architecture and included in the watch list of Docomomo International (International Committee for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement), as part of the heritage of that architectural movement in view of its innovative design concepts and novel structural model.

2. The ECLAC compound is located along the Mapocho River on 5.5 ha donated to the United Nations by the Government of Chile in 1960. Construction in the compound totals 20,108 m^2, of which 13,556 m^2 comprises office space and 6,552 m^2 consists of common and shared support areas. The ECLAC premises in Santiago currently consist of eight buildings, as shown in figure I.

Figure I
Aerial view of the ECLAC compound



1, Main Building; 2, North Building; 3, Printing Building; 4, Cafeteria; 5, CLADES Building; 6, Auditorium Building; 7, Security Building; 8, Ancillary Building.

3. The ECLAC main building in itself reinforces the structural and formal beliefs of modern architecture by blending its structure, volumes and concrete texture with the surrounding Andes Mountains, using the ground floor as open space for public gatherings, and promoting open and fluid functional office spaces. Over the years, most of the ECLAC buildings have undergone significant capital improvements; the North Building, which was built in 1989, has however received only minor corrective maintenance and repairs in the past 28 years. Interior finishes such as the flooring, office furniture and partitions have been updated, but the old metallic ceilings are non-compliant with the most recent seismic codes. Energy consumption is unusually high because of a poor building envelope and roof insulation, and an underperforming heating, ventilating and air-conditioning (HVAC) system. In

addition, a substantial number of building components such as HVAC have exceeded their normal useful life. Since the building constitutes a temporary construction, maintenance is expensive and partial renovations undertaken at different stages would be extremely costly. The net book value of the building, that is, after depreciation, represents less than 15 per cent of the gross replacement cost of the building, which indicates underinvestment in capital improvements. The recommended, most cost-effective and beneficial action is to execute a complete renovation of the building.

II. Seismic risk at the Commission in Santiago

4. The entire length of Chile lies along a major subduction zone constituting the south-western rim of the Pacific Ring of Fire. In this region, the Nazca Plate is being subducted beneath the South American Plate, resulting in the uplift and volcanism of the Andes Mountains and frequent, large-magnitude earthquakes. The two plates are converging at approximately 7 m per century. The United States Geological Survey lists approximately 25 major earthquakes that have occurred within the country's borders since 1730. More than 20 of those events are estimated to have exceeded magnitude 7.0 on the Richter scale.

5. Prior to the Maule earthquake of 2010, notable historic events in the vicinity included the magnitude 7.5 earthquake in the Valparaiso region on 8 July 1971, and the magnitude 7.8 earthquake offshore of Valparaiso on 3 March 1985, which affected areas including Santiago. A magnitude 9.5 earthquake occurred in the Valdivia region on 22 May 1960. It affected areas including Concepción, and is regarded as the largest earthquake known to have occurred in the twentieth century. Together, these earthquakes produced strong ground shaking and widespread damage in areas that were also affected by the Maule earthquake, and resulted in a total of nearly 2,000 fatalities.[1]

6. In 2010, after the earthquake in Chile, the ECLAC team of engineers conducted an assessment of the resistance of the ECLAC buildings to potential strong seismic loads. The assessment evaluation report revealed a need to undertake seismic mitigation measures for the North Building, among others, in order to make it compliant with the current minimum standards for seismic resistance that are considered necessary for the safety of its users. The results for the North Building confirmed that the old metallic ceilings are non-compliant with the latest seismic codes.

III. Assessment of the existing conditions of the North Building

7. At present, many of the main components of the building have little or no remaining useful life, and therefore require urgent attention. These conditions, originally reported in the strategic capital review report, have become more worrying since then. Compliance with building codes and standards is low and concerns over safety and security have been raised. Problems have arisen and worsened although investment has since been made. Major issues are discussed below.

[1] Data from United States Geological Survey website, "Historic earthquakes".

A. Safety and security

8. The most relevant issues concerning life safety in this building relate to seismic code compliance, fire protection and egress. As a result of the latest seismic events, the Chilean seismic code was updated and new regulations for interior ceiling and fixtures were included. The North Building is not compliant with these new codes. Ceilings are made of heavyweight metal and need to be replaced by lightweight ceiling panels. While ECLAC has been replacing ceilings in all the compound buildings since 2010, the North Building is the last building awaiting such replacement. Another safety concern is related to fire protection, stemming mainly from two major issues and some minor related problems. The first major issue is that the metallic structure of the building lacks fireproofing coating and the second is the lack of a fire suppression system. Even though a new exterior network of above-ground and underground piping with double-headed hydrants, fire hoses, hose cabinets and branch pipes was installed in 2016, the building has neither an interior fire suppression system nor a sprinkler system. The building does have a fire detection system with smoke detectors and breaking switches connected to the main alarm panel in the Central Security Office. Fire extinguishers are situated at several locations in the building and there is also a public announcement audio system for emergency messages.

9. Other minor but not less serious safety problems are a result of the aged electrical system. The electrical wiring is too old and caused some fire-related incidents in 2016, and thus a complete rewiring, and ducting and/or replacement of the cable trays, is required. Finally, there are some minor issues related to the means of egress. The building has three main entrances with double doors and two secondary entrances with simple doors. Navigation is quite complex because of the intricate layout and the lack of proper signage. The floor plan is also complex and corridors are duplicated, making it difficult to understand the layout or to have a clear path recognition.

B. Energy efficiency and indoor environmental quality

10. Owing to its poor performance envelope and to the multiple non-integrated and aged HVAC systems, the building has a poor energy performance, and the building's indoor environmental quality is quite low as a result of an obtrusive partition system and a lack of adequate lighting.

11. The lack of passive strategies, such as proper insulation, adequate glazing, solar control and natural ventilation, has also important impacts on the significant HVAC energy consumption. Different active strategies, such as replacement of HVAC components and lighting, have been implemented since the inception of the building, which have improved the indoor environmental quality but have increased energy consumption. Considering that the actual HVAC plant is using an ozone-depleting gas that is no longer legal, and has reached the end of its useful life, it is strongly recommended that it be replaced with a new, energy-efficient HVAC plant.

12. It should be noted that, with respect to energy efficiency and environmental performance, the General Assembly in its resolutions 70/205 and 71/228 requested the Secretary-General to submit an action plan for integrating sustainable development practices into its operations and facilities management, with the specific goal of a United Nations that does not, through its operations or facilities management, have a negative impact on the climate.

13. As verified during several inspection visits and preventive technical monitoring, the North Building has poor indoor environmental quality. This is

primarily due to the internal partition configuration and poor quality of interior finishes, which make the internal space dark and visually disconnected from the exterior, precluding natural light and views for staff; in addition, the acoustic quality is poor because of inadequate sound insulation. This situation may be corrected by remedial strategies such as a reconfiguration of the spatial layout, the replacement of the internal partitions, and the installation of skylights. The overall configuration of the building (the structure and layout) is such that the potential for a high-quality environment after remedial measures is high.

14. Finally, with respect to accessibility for persons with disabilities, the North Building currently does not comply with the prevailing local codes. The building is accessible by two roads, one on each side. Both building entrances have non-compliant ramps; accessible doors in both accesses are not automatic and the clear space before entering is insufficient. The building has two accessible restrooms which are not fully compliant: there are two compliant water closets in each restroom but inadequate turning space and non-compliant sinks.

C. Replacement of life-cycle components

15. As indicated in paragraph 3, the North Building was built in 1989, as a temporary structure which is now almost 30 years old and most of its components are beyond the end of their useful lives. As reported in the strategic capital review, with the exception of its structure, the average remaining useful life of the building components is less than eight years. Up to 70 per cent of the building components (which comprise the following major groups: exterior closure, roofing, interior construction, stairs, interior finishes, conveying systems, HVAC, fire protection, and electrical system) have reached the end of their standard useful lives.

D. Efficiency in office space utilization

16. Office space utilization at ECLAC is regulated by the Commission's space guidelines, which are applied in all buildings with minimal adjustments according to building shape, structural grid or spatial layout. The North Building is considered an office building with mixed use since it houses a variety of substantive divisions and also some support divisions and other sections. Meeting rooms and classrooms are also part of the functional mix. Spatial configuration is characterized by an open plan layout allowing multiple configurations. However, the existing layout favours closed offices with opaque partitions at the perimeter leaving an open space and meeting rooms at the centre with no natural light and a quite low indoor environmental quality. In addition, there are currently 60 ECLAC staff members who are located on underground floors with sub-standard office conditions and no natural lighting. Consequently, ECLAC is in the process of assessing space utilization in order to optimize the existing space and increase the assignable area[2] in the North Building.

E. Swing space requirements and availability

17. One of the issues at the ECLAC compound in Santiago in relation to this project is the limited area of swing space available within the compound. Taking into account that the North Building accommodates around 166 staff, availability of

[2] Assignable area is the portion of the plannable area on a floor that can be assigned to occupant groups or functions.

swing space is a key factor in deciding the approach to the project and its implementation. The availability of on-site swing space is to be increased by the renovation of the Printing Building in 2017, which will be able to accommodate around 50 additional staff after renovation. At the compound level, there is swing space availability for another 50 staff, making it possible to provide swing space for 100 staff. This would limit the number of stages needed to execute the renovation of the North Building. Off-site swing space availability is ubiquitous but expensive since the ECLAC compound is located in what was a residential suburban area at the time of its inauguration in 1965; nowadays this area has become an office and commercial zone.

IV. Project overview

A. Project purpose

18. The purpose of the North Building renovation project is to provide the Organization with a first-class workspace with good indoor environmental quality and efficiency in the use of energy, and which will provide all staff with a safe work environment according to codes and industry standards. The project is to be implemented through the decommissioning and renovation of an expired building with little or no remaining useful life, excessive use of energy, and a low level of compliance with codes and standards.

B. Objectives

19. The key project objectives, established at the inception of the project plan, are in line with the key objectives outlined in the report of the Secretary-General on the strategic capital review (A/68/733). The project objectives are:

(a) To maintain the property value of United Nations premises, especially related to building life-cycle replacement;

(b) To meet industry standards related to health and safety issues, including fire and life safety planning and systems design, fire suppression, fire alarm and fire exit planning;

(c) To meet building codes relative to preparedness and design against potential natural disasters and emergency situations, such as earthquakes, floods and the like;

(d) To ensure compliance with all relevant regulations relating to persons with disabilities, including provisions concerning accessibility and technology;

(e) To ensure that hazardous materials are removed from the facilities;

(f) To improve space use efficiency by maximizing the use of available office and meeting space and optimizing building support spaces; this is to be achieved through optimization of the use of the available work and meeting spaces, and providing adaptable and efficient space arrangement;

(g) To modernize outdated major building systems, including mechanical, electrical, low-voltage electrical, plumbing and conveying and vertical transportation, in order to meet industry norms and extend the useful life of building components;

(h) To move towards a more energy efficient building, specifically by reducing energy consumption, fresh water consumption, the use of non-renewable

material resources and waste generation, and improving indoor air and lighting quality;

(i) To keep disruption of the work of the United Nations to a minimum and to ensure business and operational continuity throughout project implementation.

C. Project benefits

20. *Quantifiable benefits*. Considering that the North Building's useful life is almost at an end, a major replacement of building components with a significant extension of useful life would provide the Organization with an additional 40 years of building use, which would be a major quantifiable benefit. Other major quantifiable benefits, to be gained by replacing major electro-mechanical components, are the associated savings stemming from reductions in energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, major improvements in safety and security aspects are expected to significantly reduce risk exposure and the Organization's liability. Finally, efficiency in office space utilization could potentially lead to an increase in rentable area, resulting in additional rental income for the Organization.

21. *Qualitative benefits*. Qualitative benefits cannot be measured in monetary terms but do have a very significant organizational impact. They include non-energy-related sustainability aspects, such as indoor air quality, the use of low-maintenance materials, which reduces the amount of cleaning products and water used, and the use of local materials to promote regional technologies and construction techniques. Other benefits include supporting broader United Nations business transformation initiatives by empowering a more mobile and informed workforce, and a well-designed variety of work spaces suitable for the use of modern information and communications technologies, appropriate lighting, and sufficient acoustical insulation. Overall accessibility and means of egress will be improved substantially.

D. Project strategies

22. In 2014, ECLAC conducted, as an integral part of the strategic capital review (see A/70/697, paras. 54 and 55), an assessment of the conditions of the buildings in ECLAC. The purpose of the assessment was to establish the condition of the buildings and infrastructure components and identify remedial works needed to upgrade the facilities in line with United Nations standards and industry codes. The results showed an urgent necessity for a series of major maintenance works and minor alterations that could be implemented by one of two strategies:

(a) Programmed multiple interventions that will be part of the regular maintenance operations of ECLAC with minor disruptions in the Commission's operations and minimal use of swing space;

(b) Executing a capital project such as a comprehensive renovation of the whole building with extensive use of swing space.

1. Programmed multiple intervention strategy

23. A multiple intervention strategy would entail multiple discrete renovations with minor interruptions in ECLAC operations and minimal use of swing space, executed in three phases, three years for each phase. The main objective in this strategy would be to postpone a major intervention in the building without compromising the safety and security of staff and visitors and extend the remaining

useful life of the affected building components, securing 10 more years of useful life.

24. The first phase (2018-2020) would consist of executing the most critical works in the building without significantly addressing its energy consumption problems. Major works would include, but would not be limited to, the installation of a fire suppression system, the repair of major HVAC system components, building a wastewater treatment plant, rewiring the electrical system and refurbishing the electrical boards, the installation of a new lighting system, the replacement of the ceiling system according to seismic codes, and a partial improvement of the accessibility conditions. As a result, the building would have at least acceptable operating conditions for eight more years. During the second phase (2021-2023), the execution of the postponed most critical works in the building would be considered, addressing its energy consumption problems in a comprehensive way. Works would include the replacement of major HVAC system components, the replacement of the electrical system including new electrical panels, the implementation of complete accessibility conditions, and the installation of a new natural lighting system. Finally, a third phase (2024-2026) would consist of a group of critical works mainly addressing some energy consumption issues, replacing building components which had reached the end of their useful lives, executing major repairs, and carrying out maintenance on previous works. After these works, energy consumption would be reduced but not in a significant manner and the useful life of the affected building components extended for two more years (2027 and 2028).

25. The total construction cost of these improvements is estimated at $16.254 million over a 20-year period, encompassing nine years of interventions that would leave the building in acceptable operating conditions for a period of 10 years, but would defer the required major renovation works. This would therefore have a limited effect on reducing energy consumption, and would result in higher initial costs due to multiple consulting, management, and procurement processes for 10 to 12 small projects over a nine-year period. At the end of the 10 additional years of useful life of the building, approximately in 2029, three options could be considered: a complete building renovation, a new period of multiple renovations but in a building already at the end of its useful life, or renting office space outside the compound. For the total cost of ownership calculation in table 1, the last option, rental of office space, is assumed (since at that time, the building's useful life would have expired, and the most cost-effective and logical decision would be to make no further investment in the building and to rent off-campus office space). Table 1 summarizes the costs involved in the multiple intervention strategy for each of the three considered phases that involve construction cost, the last column summarizing the costs associated with the office rental option. The construction cost in the "Remaining useful life" column is associated with investments required to move staff out of the old building and to set up the new external office rental environment and facilities according to United Nations standards. All construction costs in table 1 include escalation and project management costs.

Table 1
Total cost of ownership of the multiple intervention strategy

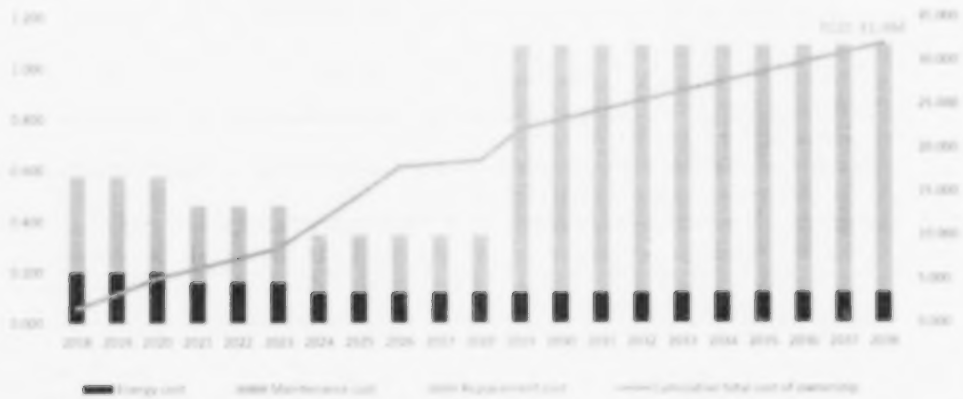
(Millions of United States dollars)

	Phase 1	*Phase 2*	*Phase 3*	*Remaining useful life*
	2018-2020	*2021-2023*	*2024-2026*	*2027-2038*
Total construction cost	3.426	2.059	8.274	2.495
Energy cost	0.600	0.480	0.360	1.440

	Phase 1	*Phase 2*	*Phase 3*	*Remaining useful life*
	2018-2020	*2021-2023*	*2024-2026*	*2027-2038*
Maintenance cost	1.130	0.904	0.678	2.712
Replacement cost	–	–	–	7.426
Cumulative total cost of ownership	**5.156**	**8.599**	**17.910**	**31.983**

26. The cost of renting off-campus office space (replacement cost of $7.426 million) amounts to about 23 per cent of the total cost of ownership for this strategy, a significant proportion. Figure II shows the impact of this replacement cost on the total cost of ownership after 2029, at which point the useful life of the building would have expired; as a result of renting off-campus office space the total cost of ownership would reach $31.983 million in 2038.

Figure II
Long-term cost analysis of the multiple intervention strategy
(Millions of United States dollars)



2. Complete building renovation strategy

27. The complete building renovation strategy consists of a one-time capital investment for a complete sustainable building renovation targeting a "net zero" building classification in which the total amount of energy used by the building on an annual basis would be equal to or less than the amount of renewable energy created on the site. (It is possible that the renovated building could produce excess energy for use in other buildings.) Major works would include but would not be limited to the replacement of the façade, the roof and HVAC, and the retrofitting of the interior. The major intent in this case would be to execute a major intervention or building renovation guaranteeing the safety and security of staff, significantly reducing not only the environmental impact but also the operating costs and extending the remaining useful life of the affected building components accordingly. It is proposed to dismantle the building, keeping its main structure to renovate it up to international codes and industry standards by replacing the entire roofing and façade system with a highly efficient thermal and acoustic envelope. The total construction cost of this project is estimated at $14.118 million, involving two years of intervention that would leave the building in optimum operating conditions for an

additional period of 25 years. The proposed project would also provide opportunities for the most cost-effective method to provide short-term benefits for the Organization in relation to building performance, energy conservation, use of space and the life-cycle replacement of building systems that have reached the end of their useful lives.

28. Table 2 shows the cost breakdown of this strategy, showing the capital investment required for the comprehensive renovation of the building, and the remaining useful life, which would require only an overall lower maintenance cost of $2.825 million for a period of 14 years, as compared to the multiple intervention strategy with the renting of external office space. This maintenance cost represents an impact of only 15.5 per cent of total cost of ownership over 20 years of $18.185 million, which is significantly lower than the impact of the multiple intervention strategy shown earlier of $31.983 million.

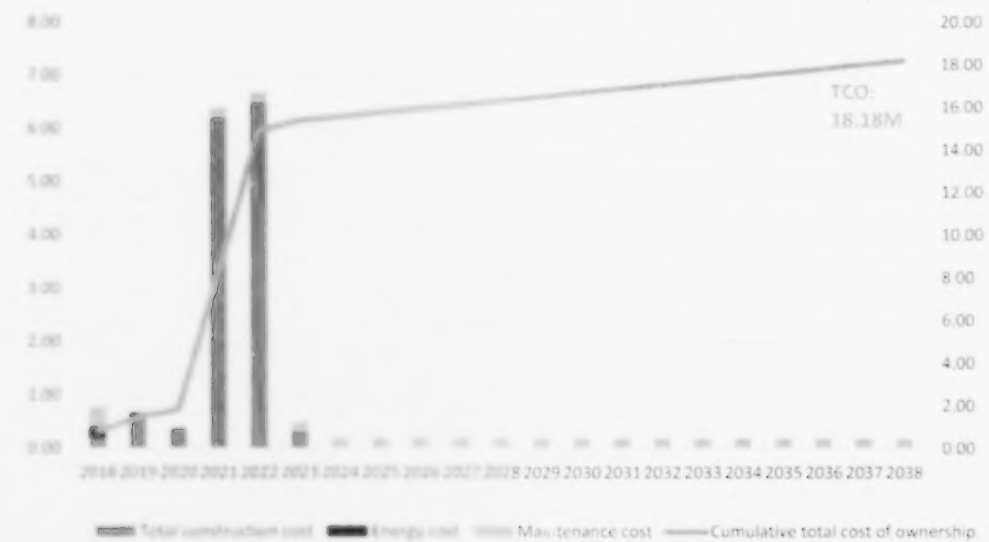
Table 2
Total cost of ownership of the complete building renovation strategy

(Millions of United States dollars)

	Phase 1	*Phase 2*	*Remaining useful life*
	2018-2020	*2021-2023*	*2024-2038*
Total construction cost	1.133	12.984	–
Energy cost	0.300	–	–
Maintenance cost	0.377	0.565	2.825
Cumulative total cost of ownership	**1.810**	**15.359**	**18.185**

Figure III
Long-term cost analysis of complete building renovation strategy

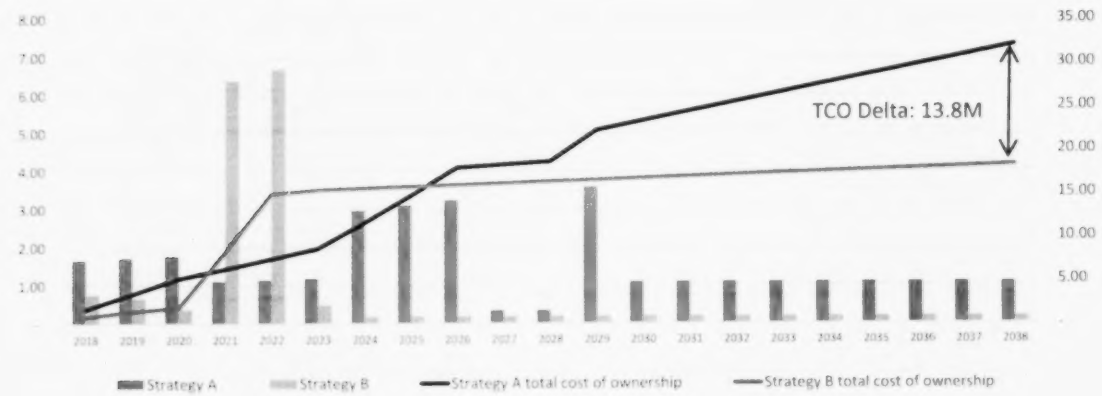
(Millions of United States dollars)



Comparison of strategies

29. Considering the direct and indirect costs of each strategy, the total cost of ownership including construction cost, energy consumption, maintenance cost, swing space requirements and the cost after extension of the useful life, the programmed multiple intervention strategy comes out as the more expensive option for the Organization, with a total cost of $31.983 million over a 20-year period. Executing a capital project as a comprehensive renovation of the whole building would be a more cost-effective approach, with a total value of $18.185 million for the same 20-year period, for a difference of $13.798 million. The comparison is shown in figure IV.

Figure IV
Comparison of the two strategies
(Millions of United States dollars)



V. Analysis of options

30. Under the complete building renovation strategy, there would be two viable options relating to the provision of swing space to accommodate staff during construction.

31. Of the total 166 staff in the North Building, 100 staff could be accommodated in internal swing space already available in various buildings. For the remaining 66 staff, there are two options to consider for creating the required extra swing space:

Option 1. On-site temporary building

32. This option would require setting up a temporary building in the south parking lot of the ECLAC campus, in the same location where a temporary building was set up in 2010. The construction would consist of container-like prefabricated 15 m^2 modules that are quickly built into a single connected and consolidated temporary building. Bathrooms would be provided in the existing facilities in the South Pavilion and the CLADES Building, which would be adjacent to the temporary building.

33. It should be noted that ECLAC has already used this option in the past with satisfactory results during the renovations and reconstruction works of buildings that were affected by the 2010 earthquake.

34. The key advantages of option 1 are the following:

(a) **Minimal security risk.** Since the building would be on campus, all safety and security staff and procedures would remain the same for the same population. Some minor safety and security operational considerations might be needed for evacuation or emergency procedures.

(b) **No dependence on external maintenance and support.** All technical aspects of the temporary building such as electrical systems, cleaning, voice/data communications and information technology infrastructure would be handled in their entirety by the corresponding ECLAC units. This implies that there would be no additional costs to consider for support, and the same levels of service that users currently have would be maintained.

(c) **Use of existing facilities.** There would be many options for connecting power and communications to the temporary building, the same office IP telephone system would be utilized with no impact on usability or retraining/relearning of new equipment systems. No additional Internet Service provider agreements or telephony contracts would be required.

(d) **Lower project risk.** ECLAC implemented a similar project in 2010, when it was required to design and build an on-campus modular temporary office building for swing space; there are many lessons learned from that previous project and known implementation details that would contribute to a more efficient and successful implementation for the new project.

(e) **Reutilization of building materials.** Some structures used for the previous project would be reutilized, resulting in lower implementation costs, for example the metal and polycarbonate connecting roof between the temporary building and the South Pavilion.

(f) **Low impact relocation process.** The relocation being 100 per cent on site, any moving of office furniture and office equipment between buildings would be much easier/faster to execute and control, would be safer and at a much lower cost as no external moving contracts would be required.

(g) **Better control over project timings.** A decision to migrate staff from the North Building to the temporary facility would be triggered almost immediately and as soon as the temporary facility is finished, thus providing for a more controllable and effective project execution as there would be no external dependencies.

35. The key disadvantages of option 1 are the following:

(a) **Intrusiveness.** The temporary building would occupy a parking area normally used by ECLAC staff in the South Building. It is estimated that a total of 20 to 26 parking spaces would be used by the building. Should they be required, ECLAC would use nearby alternate parking facilities for events or congresses, which are normally fully occupied during such events.

(b) **Impact on existing ECLAC operations.** The project would require the involvement of the procurement, facilities management, safety and security, and information technology units, as well as other units for a successful implementation. The cost of resources and time would need to be considered especially during the set-up and tear-down stages of the temporary building.

36. The cost of setting up the temporary building, as provided by the same supplier as was selected for the project implemented in 2010, is estimated at $90,800.

Option 2. Offsite office rental

37. Option 2 would avoid all the design and construction works included in option 1 and aims for a less intrusive or more traditional approach to providing the additional required swing space by renting office space in Santiago near the ECLAC facility.

38. The ECLAC campus is located in a neighbourhood in Santiago with good rental office space available nearby, although rental costs are high because of the demand and a relatively low supply. ECLAC has conducted research on the average cost per m^2 of rental office space within the Vitacura neighbourhood (within a radius of about 2 to 6 km of ECLAC) and with an average market rent of $23.24 per m^2.

39. Using a space occupation density of three persons to every 15 m^2, the total required area of useable office space for 66 staff would be 330 m^2. At the average market rent of $23.24 per m^2 per month, the total cost for 66 staff would amount to $7,669 per month, with a total cost for the project (24 months) of $184,060.

40. Option 2 would also require some capital investment for the set-up of the office space according to United Nations standards, at a cost of $500 per m^2 for a total of $165,000 for 66 staff.

41. The key advantages of option 2 are the following:

(a) **Non-intrusiveness.** Using off-site rental office space would require no intervention and hence no use of internal resources and on-site premises for setting up swing space.

(b) **Impact on existing ECLAC operations.** There would be minimal involvement of existing operating units in ECLAC to set up external rental offices.

42. The key disadvantages for option 2 are the following:

(a) **Higher cost.** Compared to setting up a temporary on-site building for swing space, the cost of renting office space off campus would be about $304,000 higher.

(b) **Higher security risk.** It would be more difficult and costly to maintain the United Nations standards of security and safety in an off-site non-United Nations office building.

(c) **Dependence on external maintenance and support.** Technical aspects of the rental facility such as the electrical system, cleaning, voice/data communications and information technology infrastructure would need to be subcontracted (at least in part) to third parties to guarantee the required United Nations levels of service.

(d) **High impact relocation process.** A moving contractor would be required to pack and move the office furniture and equipment to and from the rental office facilities.

(e) **Less control over project timings.** It would be more difficult to coordinate the availability of consolidated off-site rental space with the building renovation project, which could affect the overall project start and finish dates.

43. On the basis of cost-benefit analysis above, the Secretary-General recommends Option 1. On-site temporary building, for the provision of swing space.

A. Project plan and schedules

44. The overall project plan is divided into the following six phases:

(a) **Preplanning.** Activities for this phase have already begun in 2017 and include the costing, feasibility study, preliminary design and investigation activities.

(b) **Planning.** This phase would be performed during 2018 and includes activities required to recruit a project team and prepare the scope of work and tender documents for the design phase.

(c) **Design.** The objective of the design phase is to achieve a structural design proposal and associated specialty contract specifications that will be part of the full design package used for the construction tender phase.

(d) **Tender.** A one-year tender phase would be required to prepare detailed bidding documents, technical specifications and all design material required to award the construction contract to a selected prime contractor.

(e) **Construction.** Construction phase would involve moving all staff to the temporary swing space, dismantling and demolition works, construction, installation testing, commissioning and handover of the newly renovated facility.

(f) **Close-out.** During close-out staff would gradually move from the temporary swing space to the new building, and contractors would finalize pending punch list items and the defects and liability period would be initiated.

45. The planned schedule for the project is shown in table 3.

Table 3
Project schedule

Phase	*2017*	*2018*	*2019*	*2020*	*2021*	*2022*	*2023*
Preplanning							
Planning							
Design							
Tender							
Construction							
Close-out							

B. Project cost estimates

46. The project costs have been estimated as shown in annex II:

(a) *Trade costs*. An estimated $8.5 million capital investment is required for the design and build phase.

(b) *Consultancy fees*. An estimated $0.6 million would be required to hire a project architect, project engineer and other subject matter expert consultants throughout the various phases of the project.

(c) *Escalation and contingency costs*. Escalation and contingency costs account for about 21 per cent or approximately $3.3 million of the overall project cost, and have been estimated with a 5 per cent compounded rate for escalation and 10 per cent for the contingency provision. Escalation costs take into consideration the construction cost index which is provided by the Chilean Chamber of Construction. The contingency provision has been determined on the basis of best industry practices and experience from other similar projects.

(d) *Project management costs*. A project management team would be needed starting from 2018, consisting of a Project Manager (National Officer) and one

architect (Local level). The Project Manager would be present throughout the entire project and one additional Local level staff member is expected to come on board as the project progresses through the various phases.

(e) *Risk management*. Resources in the amount of $0.2 million would be required for risk management purposes, which accounts for 1.3 per cent of the overall project budget.

(f) *Additional swing space*. Of the 166 staff that would be moved, 100 staff could be accommodated in existing swing space available in various buildings in ECLAC. The remaining 66 staff would need to be accommodated in temporary swing space to be provided in an on-campus temporary building (option 1 for the swing space).

47. The costs were determined using the most up-to-date information available regarding the construction market in Santiago; the estimates are presented in accordance with the standards included in the guidelines for the management of construction projects of the United Nations, issued by the Office of Central Support Services.

C. Cost-benefit and risk assessment

48. The purpose of the cost-benefit and risk assessment analysis is to determine the best overall value proposition for the Organization by looking at the most efficient long-term cost advantage combined with optimizing the safety and environmental operating conditions of the North Building.

49. As shown in section IV.D, "Project strategies", above, there is a clear advantage to the one-time capital renovation strategy over performing multiple interventions, based on the total cost of ownership ($18.185 million versus $31.983 million) and on the added benefits of reduced (zero) energy consumption, lower ongoing maintenance costs, and an extended useful life of the building.

VI. Recommendation

50. On the basis of the cost-benefit analysis, the recommended option is to perform a one-time capital renovation project with an overall investment cost of $14.118 million, which would not only provide ECLAC with a fully renovated, code compliant and safe building for its staff and visitors, but also achieve a net-zero category building in terms of energy generation and consumption, and would include the North Building on a distinguished list of buildings in the region that have achieved such a category.

VII. Project governance

51. A chart depicting the project governance and team structure is provided in annex I.

A. Project owner and oversight

52. The project owner would be the Executive Secretary of ECLAC. The Executive Secretary has designated the Director of the Division of Administration as Project Executive, who would be responsible for managing the dedicated project management team, interacting with internal and external stakeholders, and reporting

on strategic issues requiring senior-level decision-making. The day-to-day project execution would be under the leadership of the dedicated Project Manager. The proposed project governance and management structures set out in annex I are based on the generic structure contained in the guidelines for the management of construction projects issued by the Office of Central Support Services in January 2016, which was modified for this specific project. The salient features of the governance structure are:

(a) Well-defined coordination and support on the various aspects of the project between the Office of Central Support Services at Headquarters and ECLAC to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and provide alerts and early remedial action in case issues arise;

(b) Early establishment of the dedicated project management team and support functions with clear reporting lines;

(c) The establishment of a stakeholders committee to assist the Executive Secretary at ECLAC and the Director of Administration to proactively manage the project;

(d) The inclusion of an independent risk management framework early in the project development process.

53. The stakeholders committee would be led by the Executive Secretary, or her designee, and would provide her with advice and guidance with respect to the operational aspects of the project. The committee would not be able to make changes that would affect the scope, schedule or cost of the project. The committee would draw its members from ECLAC, other secretariat offices based within the Commission's premises in Santiago and external entities.

54. ECLAC members of the stakeholders committee would include the General Services Section, the Publications and Web Services Division, the Sustainable Development and Human Settlements Division, the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre — Population Division, the Natural Resources and Infrastructure Division, the Information and Communications Technologies Section, the Office of the Deputy Executive Secretary for Management and Programme Analysis and the Security and Safety Section. Membership from other secretariat offices includes the Office of Information and Communications Technology, the Department of Safety and Security and the Office of Central Support Services at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Advice and input from other stakeholders such as the United Nations country team would also be sought, if required. In addition, external stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile and Vitacura County would be updated as required on the project. The stakeholders committee would be informed on the details of the project at key milestones with regard to its scope, schedule and cost.

55. The Secretary-General is also mindful of the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/70/7/Add.3, para. 21), that the establishment of an advisory board for the project should be considered. While that recommendation is still under consideration, the Secretary-General wishes to draw a distinction between the present proposed project, the programme requirements of which are relatively straightforward (as it entails the renovation of an existing office building), and larger projects for which advisory boards have been established that are more complex in scope and comprise multiple-use spaces (conference rooms, technical rooms, commercial areas and office space). The Secretary-General is currently disinclined to establish an advisory board for this project, but stands ready to receive additional guidance from the General Assembly on the matter.

B. Role of the Office of Central Support Services

56. The Office of Central Support Services, as indicated in Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2013/1, provides support and coordination to offices away from Headquarters and regional commissions in the management of their properties and construction projects. In line with General Assembly resolution 70/248, section XII, paragraph 11, the role of the Office on the project has been established and is included in the overall governance structure (see annex I).

57. The Office provides overall project oversight, provides ECLAC with technical guidance and advice on the project, ensures that the project will comply with overall organizational objectives, for example those set out in the strategic capital review, share lessons learned from other capital projects undertaken by the Organization and coordinate with New York-based project stakeholders, across Secretariat departments and governing bodies.

58. In addition, and in consideration of the guidance received from the General Assembly in its resolution 70/248, section IX, paragraph 13, on the renovation of the Africa Hall at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), and the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in its report on the seismic mitigation project at the premises of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) (A/70/7/Add.3, paras. 22 and 27), the Office of Central Support Services would take a lead role in providing independent risk management services for both projects. To that effect, the Office is in the process of procuring the services of a specialist risk-management firm to assist in providing the Organization with expert services, including a quantitative risk assessment, to perform services on two ongoing projects at ECA and ESCAP. Should the General Assembly approve the project proposal for the renovation of the North Building at ECLAC, the contract for the firm would be extended to include the project. Such services would be managed centrally by the Office in New York, and funded as a part of the project cost plan (see annex II).

59. As indicated in the lessons learned from the other capital projects of the Secretariat (A/69/760), having a dedicated project management team of an adequate size, starting early in the planning stage of the project and working continuously through to project completion are essential components to ensure the success of a capital project of such size. The proposed dedicated project team would be composed of a Project Manager, project team staff, project support staff, independent and integrated risk management service providers and external specialized consultants. Under both options 1 and 2, the dedicated project team working on site would have the same member composition in number and functions, but for a different duration, in accordance with the project implementation timeline.

C. Dedicated project management team and project support

60. *ECLAC project team*. The team would be led by the Project Manager (National Officer). The level of National Officer is proposed for the Project Manager in order not only to include local expertise in building construction and related codes and standards but also to accurately reflect the required level of expertise and responsibility of the Project Manager, as well as the appropriate reporting lines within the corporate governance structure. Under the leadership of the Project Manager, the project team would be composed of one architect (Local level) for the initial part of the project when design and major structural work are carried out.

61. *ECLAC project support*. The project support would be provided by one Administrative Assistant (Local level) for the entire duration of the project.

62. *Consultancy services*. External to the United Nations, but within the dedicated project management team, the services of consultants, contractors and suppliers would be required. Given the specialized nature of the project, external consultancies for the provision of architectural, engineering and construction management would be needed to produce the detailed design and technical documentation for tender and oversight of the construction works. These services would be managed and coordinated by the lead architectural and engineering firm. Required specialized services would also include architectural and interior consultancy services for office space design and space planning related to the implementation of flexible workplace strategies and the change management components of the project. Whereas the role of the dedicated project management team would be to coordinate and oversee the works on behalf of the United Nations, the external consultants would among others be responsible for producing the actual detailed design and construction documents for procurement of construction and fitting-out services, providing technical and contract administration and oversight during the actual construction and fitting-out works, specifically related to flexible workspace construction, producing and coordinating office space design and programming, producing floor layouts and any materials and documentation required for communication, staff outreach and engagement.

D. Independent risk management

63. In order to implement a robust integrated approach to risk management in line with industry best practices, it is proposed that an independent risk-management firm be included as part of this project as similar services were incorporated in the governance of other substantial capital projects undertaken by the United Nations. The risk-management framework would include development and use of a risk register, and a risk-based approach to the establishment and management of the contingency provision.

64. The independent risk-management firm would report directly to the Office of Central Support Services in New York to provide an independent assessment of the course of the various project actions, provide expertise to the project, assist in identifying and mitigating any risks that may affect the successful delivery of the project and support informed decision-making.

65. The dedicated project management team, including its consultants, would be responsible for integrating risk management as part of the regular/ongoing project management process.

E. Host country arrangements

66. The host country has provided for significant support arrangements for United Nations operations in Chile and specifically for the ECLAC compound. The Economic Commission for Latin America was established by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 106 (VI) of 25 February 1948 and began to function that same year. The scope of the Commission's work was later broadened to include the countries of the Caribbean and, by resolution 1984/67 of 27 July 1984, the Council decided to change its name to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

67. The ECLAC headquarters building was constructed in 1965 on a 5-ha lot donated by the Government of Chile in 1960. The compound continued to grow, and in 1997 the Government of Chile donated two additional plots, increasing the total area to 5.9 ha. A host country agreement was signed in February 1948, providing for

privileges and immunities including duty exemption for contracts and material importations for entitled staff and for official purposes such as construction materials, equipment and infrastructure. These benefits would be extended to any construction project, leading to reduced overall cost, and expedited importation arrangements through the established host country liaison arrangements.

VIII. Next steps

68. Should the General Assembly authorize the Secretary-General to commence the project in 2018, the immediate next steps would be as follows:

(a) Complete the analysis of the existing conditions of space utilization late in 2017;

(b) Recruit the dedicated project management team (one National Officer and two Local level staff) in 2018;

(c) Tender for architectural consultancy services for the renovation of the North Building, interior space planning/design, and change management services;

(d) Complete the detailed swing space strategy; prepare design and tender actions for the construction of swing space;

(e) Establish a stakeholders' committee, change management and corporate support group and other administrative agreements;

(f) Engage the independent risk-management firm (managed by the Office of Central Support Services in New York) to commence risk management services;

(g) Coordinate with the host country about host country arrangements.

IX. Project costs and resource requirements for the biennium 2018-2019

69. The resource requirements for 2018 are summarized in table 4.

Table 4
Resource requirements for 2018
(Thousands of United States dollars)

Budget section and cost components	*2018*
Section 21, Economic development in Latin America and the Caribbean	
Project management	112.0
Subtotal, section 21	**112.0**
Section 33, Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance	
Risk management	80.0
Subtotal, section 33	**80.0**
Total of all budget sections	**192.0**

X. Action to be taken by the General Assembly

70. **The General Assembly is recommended:**

(a) **To approve the proposed scope, cost and implementation strategy for the implementation of the project;**

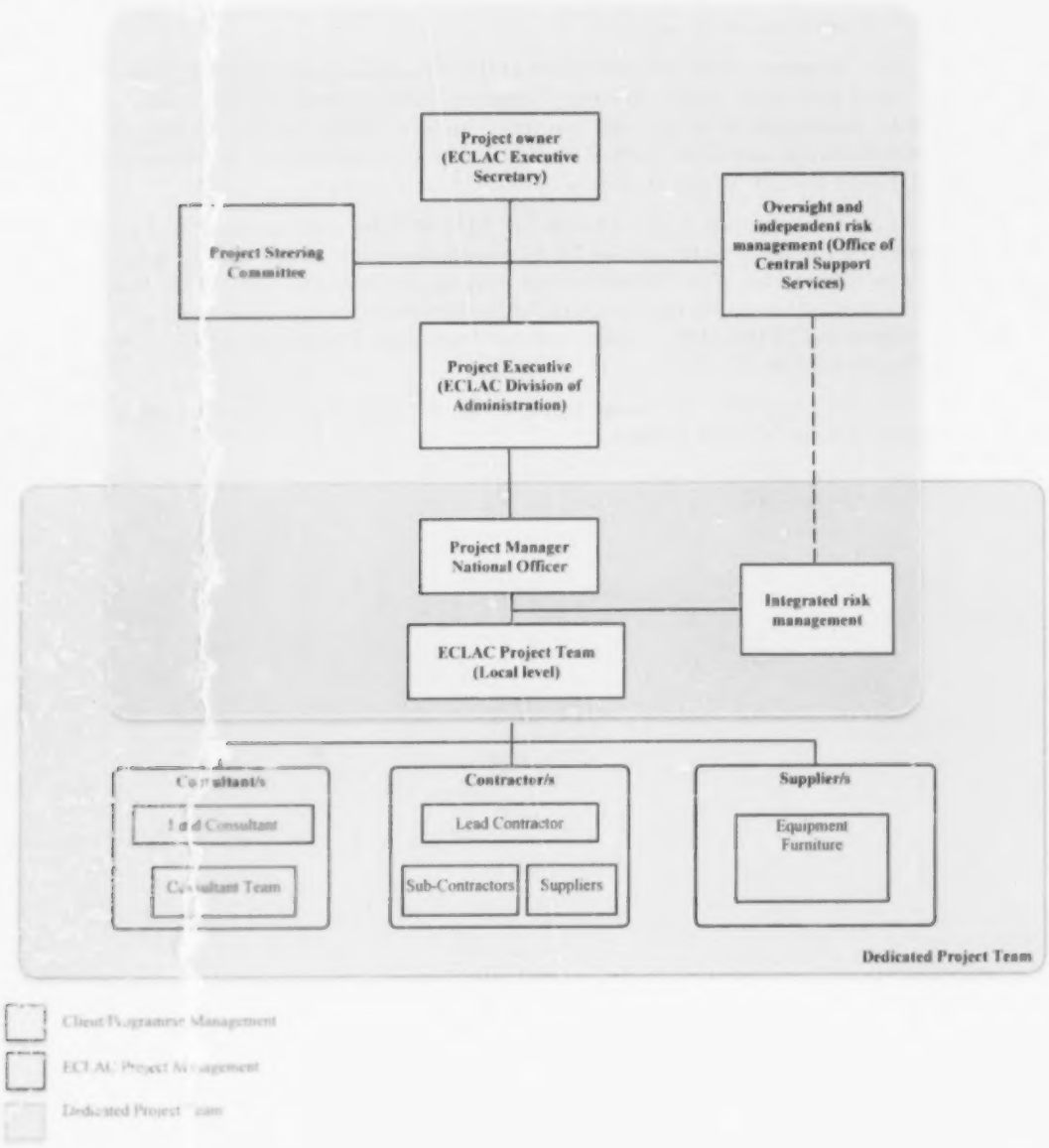
(b) **To approve the establishment of three positions (one National Officer and two Local level staff) effective 1 January 2018, related to the dedicated project management team and project support staff, under section 21, Economic development in Latin America and the Caribbean, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019;**

(c) **To appropriate an amount of $192,000 for the project in 2018, comprising $112,000 under section 21, Economic development in Latin America and the Caribbean, and $80,000 under section 33, Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019, which would represent a charge against the contingency fund;**

(d) **To approve the establishment of a multi-year construction-in-progress account for this project.**

Annex I

Proposed project governance structure



Annex II

Detailed cost plan

(Millions of United States dollars)

Cost estimates	*2018*	*2019*	*2020*	*2021*	*2022*	*2023*	*Total*
1. Trade costs				4.266	4.266		8.532
2. Consultancy fees (architect, engineer)		0.250	0.050	0.100	0.100	0.050	0.550
Subtotal	–	**0.250**	**0.050**	**4.366**	**4.366**	**0.050**	**9.082**
3. Escalation costs		0.026	0.008	0.938	1.202	0.017	2.190
4. Contingency costs		0.027	0.006	0.529	0.555	0.007	1.124
5. Project management costs	0.112	0.225	0.290	0.290	0.290	0.225	1.431
6. Risk management costs	0.080	0.030	0.030	0.030	0.030		0.200
7. Additional swing space costs				0.045	0.045		0.091
Subtotal	**0.192**	**0.308**	**0.333**	**1.832**	**2.122**	**0.248**	**5.036**
Total	**0.192**	**0.558**	**0.383**	**6.198**	**6.488**	**0.298**	**14.118**

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Seventy-second session
Items 37 and 38 of the provisional agenda*

The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 71/23. It contains replies received from the parties concerned to the notes verbales sent by the Secretary-General pursuant to the request contained in paragraph 25 of the resolution. The report also contains the observations of the Secretary-General on the current state of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and on international efforts to move the peace process forward with a view to achieving a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. The report covers the period from September 2016 to August 2017.

* A/72/150.

** The present report was submitted late, owing to the fact that additional time was required to ensure that important developments taking place during the reporting period were adequately documented.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/23.

2. On 1 July 2017, pursuant to the request contained in paragraph 25 of the above-mentioned resolution, I addressed the following letter to the President of the Security Council:

> "I have the honour to refer to resolution 71/23, which the General Assembly adopted on 30 November 2016, at its seventy-first session, under the agenda item 'Question of Palestine'.
>
> "Paragraph 25 of the resolution requests the Secretary-General to continue his efforts with the parties concerned, and in consultation with the Security Council, towards the attainment of a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine and the promotion of peace in the region and to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session a report on these efforts and on developments on this matter.
>
> "In order to fulfil my reporting responsibilities under this resolution, I should be grateful if you would kindly convey to me the views of the Security Council by 31 July 2017.
>
> "Recalling the Secretariat's obligation to observe the page limit of its reports, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/214, I would like to encourage the Security Council to limit its submission to 1,500 words."

3. As at 23 August, no response had been received to that request.

4. In a note verbale dated 23 May 2017 to the parties concerned, I sought the positions of the Governments of Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as the State of Palestine, regarding any steps taken by them to implement the relevant provisions of the resolution. As at 31 July 2017, replies had been received from Israel and the State of Palestine.

5. The note verbale dated 28 June 2017 from the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations reads as follows:

> "Resolution 71/23, 'Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine', constitutes the General Assembly's comprehensive, authoritative stance regarding the question of Palestine and the historic efforts to achieve a just, lasting, peaceful solution. The principles affirmed therein, in conformity with international law and other relevant resolutions, constitute the pillars of a solution, and the broad support granted annually for the resolution confirms the international consensus in this regard.
>
> "On the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of Israel's occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories in 1967, the Assembly again resoundingly supported this resolution. This was a clear rejection of Israel's cynical narrative denying the occupation, while actively entrenching it by all illegal means, and obstructing the efforts to peacefully resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which remains the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict.
>
> "Upholding its political, legal and moral responsibilities, including the obligations stemming from resolution 181 (II), the Assembly has reiterated its calls for, inter alia, Israel's complete withdrawal from the Palestinian territory occupied since June 1967, including East Jerusalem; realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination and the right to their independent State; achievement of the two-State solution of Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace and security

within recognized borders based on the pre-1967 borders; and a just solution for the Palestine refugee question based on resolution 194 (III).

"The Assembly's reaffirmation of the requirements for a just solution was considerably reinforced by the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2334 (2016). That resolution, pursued earnestly by the State of Palestine with conscientious Council members, reflects the international community's long-standing commitment to peace via implementation, inter alia, of the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 446 (1979), 452 (1979), 465 (1980), 476 (1980), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008), and full respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force.

"The Council's demands in resolution 2334 (2016) echo the Assembly's demands in resolution 71/23, underscoring the international consensus and exigency of peace efforts. This action has helped restore some credibility to the Council, which has been impaired by the failure to implement its resolutions and hold Israel, the occupying Power, accountable for its violations. It has also provided renewed hope for a solution, critical for alleviating the despair of Palestine's youth and reviving belief in the possibility of a better future, free from occupation, fear and want.

"Resolution 2334 (2016) was welcomed globally. It was viewed as urgent in light of the deteriorating situation on the ground; escalation of tensions and cycles of violence; erosion of the two-State solution on the 1967 lines due to Israel's unrelenting entrenchment of the occupation and annexation attempts, mainly through settlement activities flagrantly violating international law; and lack of a political horizon to bring an end to the Israeli occupation, ensure Palestinian rights and secure a just peace.

"While the Council explicitly reiterated the demand that Israel cease all settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and fully respect its legal obligations, it further underlined that it 'will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations', and called upon all States 'to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967'. Palestine has consistently made these calls in its bilateral and multilateral outreach, viewing them as fundamental for salvaging the two-State solution and advancing its realization.

"Considering the obligation to protect civilians, the Council's call for cessation of all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, and all acts of provocation, incitement and destruction, and for accountability, has also been widely supported.

"Also welcomed were the Council's call for the launch of credible negotiations on all final status issues and for collective efforts to promote peace, 'aimed at achieving, without delay, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map and an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967'.

"The Palestinian leadership has affirmed readiness to abide by resolution 2334 (2016) in its entirety and commitment to its implementation, just as it has strived to uphold all relevant resolutions, including resolution 71/23. This

includes the commitment to non-violence and peaceful, political, diplomatic, legal means for attainment of Palestinian rights and a just, lasting solution and cooperation with all international and regional efforts to this end.

"Israel, on the other hand, reacted with blatant hostility and contempt towards the Security Council following the resolution's adoption, publicly declaring its disrespect of the Council's authoritative decisions and demands. The Israeli Government proceeded to violate the resolution aggressively in the months thereafter with advancement of plans for construction of thousands more settlement units across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem; continuation of virulent rhetoric and incitement against the Palestinian people and leadership; and continued complicity in and lack of accountability for the violence, terror and crimes committed by its settlers and soldiers against Palestinian civilians.

"Yet, despite Israel's violations — whether in times of peace process or political stalemate — the Palestinian leadership has adhered to the peace path. For nearly 30 years, Palestine's position has mirrored the global consensus on the two-State solution. This began with the Palestine National Council's acceptance of the solution in the 1988 Declaration of Independence, a major compromise agreeing to establish the Palestinian State on only 22 per cent of our historic homeland, for the sake of realizing Palestinian rights, including to independence, and establishing a just peace. This compromise remains the primary testament to our commitment to peace and, with the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, represents the boldest contribution towards solving the conflict and should be recognized as such.

"Commitment to this compromise has been clearly affirmed, including at the highest levels by President Mahmoud Abbas and the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Moreover, it has been bolstered by repeated pledges to peacefully resolve the conflict, in accordance with the Charter and the relevant United Nations resolutions, as confirmed, inter alia, in the 28 September 2011 application by the State of Palestine for admission to United Nations membership, and with international law, as reflected in Palestine's accession to numerous international treaties and conventions.

"It has also been the mainstay of Palestine's regional and international engagement, through every peace initiative and United Nations endeavour and all other multilateral and bilateral engagement, including as reflected in the relevant declarations by the League of Arab States, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Group of 77, and in diplomatic and cooperation agreements concluded with many States that have recognized Palestine.

"In the period since the adoption of resolution 71/23, this commitment has been borne out in the Palestinian leadership's cooperation with, inter alia, the French initiative, including in regard to the Paris Peace Conference on 15 January 2017; efforts by the new United States administration of President Donald J. Trump to advance peace, including affirmation of readiness to engage in negotiations; efforts by the Quartet members, collectively and individually, as reflected in the series of meetings held by President Abbas and other high-level Palestinian officials in Brussels, Moscow, Washington, Cairo and Riyadh, among others; and Arab States' efforts, including reaffirmation of the Arab Peace Initiative by the Arab Summit Conference in Jordan in March 2017.

"It should be considered extraordinary that this commitment to a peaceful path has endured despite continuous exacerbation of the injustice

inflicted on the Palestinian people by the decision to partition Mandate Palestine by resolution 181 (II) in 1947 and the ensuing tragedy of the 1948 Nakba through 50 years of Israel's foreign occupation since 1967. The consequences have been grave for our people, who have withstood incessant human rights violations, violence and terror, and war crimes under this half-century occupation, in breach of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, relevant United Nations resolutions, the relevant provisions of the Rome Statute, and the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

"The reality is that Israel's occupation has only subsisted — and can only subsist — on violations. It is illegal in every dimension and manifestation, causing immeasurable suffering, indignity and insecurity for the Palestinian people, amounting to a constant protection crisis.

"These violations include, inter alia: military raids by the occupying forces causing Palestinian civilian casualties, including loss of life; arbitrary arrest and detention operations and imprisonment of 6,500 Palestinians, including children and women, who are routinely exposed to physical and psychological abuse and torture, with the male population most severely affected; restrictions on movement and other fundamental freedoms, including to worship, education, health care, development and water; and imposition of a 10-year blockade on Gaza, isolating and collectively punishing the 2 million Palestinians there. Such actions constitute grave breaches of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and are compounding dire humanitarian and socioeconomic conditions, which, the United Nations country team has determined, will lead to Gaza being uninhabitable by 2020 if the situation is not immediately remedied.

"Also severely affecting the civilian population's well-being, as well as the contiguity and unity of the Palestinian land and the chances for realizing the two-State solution on the 1967 lines, are the violations committed in the context of Israel's unlawful colonization campaign through its construction and expansion of colonial settlements, the wall and military infrastructure in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. This has also involved countless military orders, so-called 'legislative schemes' and other illegal practices aimed at facilitating settlement activities, including confiscation of land, demolition of homes and structures, forced displacement of civilians and exploitation of natural resources, altering the demographic and geographic situation on the ground and dragging us ever closer to a one-State reality of apartheid.

"Israeli incitement and inflammatory rhetoric on Jerusalem and provocations and violence by Jewish extremists against Muslim and Christian holy sites, particularly targeting the Haram al-Sharif, also continue to stoke sensitivities and threaten to trigger a religious conflict. Such violations are being perpetrated jointly and non-stop by the Government of Israel, the occupying Power, its military occupying forces and extremist settlers.

"Against this backdrop, Palestine's contribution to the implementation of relevant resolutions and the objective of peace and stability must also be measured by all that the Palestinian Government and national institutions have done over the decades to mitigate the occupation's devastating consequences and preserve peace prospects. Confronted by perpetual decline of the humanitarian, socioeconomic and security situation, we have exerted all efforts to alleviate our people's suffering, allay tensions, ensure calm and security, promote reconciliation and give hope to our people that a better

future is within reach and that not another generation will have to suffer the fate of occupation, oppression, dispossession and exile that their forefathers have borne. Such hope is vital for pushing against the radicalism and extremism plaguing the region, especially among youth.

"While unusual in a situation of occupation — perhaps unprecedented — we have pursued these objectives continuously in every sector, as reflected in the priorities set in successive Palestinian National Development Plans presented by Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah and preceding Governments, and also in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. The programmes of United Nations agencies, with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) at the forefront, along with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and numerous other organizations, have been instrumental in this regard, as have been the assistance and solidarity extended to Palestine by concerned States from every corner of the globe.

"Such support has been exemplary in the case of UNRWA, which has received generous voluntary funding from donor countries since its establishment in 1949. As of this note's writing, efforts continue with stakeholders and partners, including host countries, to foster more predictable, sufficient and sustained support to UNRWA to effectively implement its mandate. This support is vital for over 5.3 million Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA, millions of whom still live in 58 camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Occupied Palestine. These efforts recognize the indispensability of the humanitarian and development aid of UNWRA; its critical stabilizing role in the region; the commitment made in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants to ensure sufficient funding to the Agency; and the fact that for millions of refugees, UNRWA is the only lifeline, pending a just solution. Our engagement on this also constitutes a substantial contribution to the peace we seek.

"While our efforts and international support have been constant, what remains absent is the political will to implement the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, imperative for achievement of a peaceful settlement. Despite all good-faith intentions, the international community continues to fail to fulfil its legal, political and moral obligations in the face of Israel's total disrespect for the law. This failure is even more striking in this fiftieth year of Israel's occupation, with no viable political horizon for its end.

"The cycle of Israeli impunity and lack of accountability continue to thwart peace efforts, deepening the political impasse. Since Israel's suspension of American-led peace talks in 2014, insufficient pressure has been exerted on the Israeli Government to cease its violations and destruction of the two-State solution. Even after the Council's adoption of resolution 2334 (2016), there has been no meaningful effort to compel Israeli compliance; rather, it continues its violation without consequence.

"As called for in resolution 2334 (2016), Israel must, inter alia, demonstrate through policies and actions a genuine commitment to the two-State solution and create conditions necessary for promoting peace. It is time for Israel to cease its lip service to the two-State solution; its propaganda distorting the reality of its unlawful occupation; its incitement against the Palestinian people and leadership; and its mockery of the United Nations. Its respect for the law must be demanded without exceptions or conditions.

"Only international law can ensure that the negotiations on final status issues — Jerusalem, Palestine refugees, settlements, borders, security, prisoners and water — result in a just, sustainable peace. As reflected in the Secretary-General's agenda for the United Nations, peaceful resolution of conflicts requires a human rights perspective, a justice perspective, a development perspective, and not just a security perspective, and the root causes of the conflict must be addressed.

"In line with the permanent responsibility of the United Nations towards the question of Palestine, we appeal again for serious efforts to implement the relevant resolutions towards realizing Palestinian rights, including of the Palestine refugees; ending the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and finally achieving the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital; and establishing lasting peace, security and coexistence between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples on the basis of the two-State solution on the 1967 lines. The Palestinian leadership reaffirms its commitment to a peaceful and just solution, and likewise urges the international community to uphold its obligations and commitments."

6. The note verbale dated 31 July 2017 from the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations reads as follows:

"Over the course of the past year, the wave of deadly terror attacks against the people of Israel has continued unabated. One of the most recent such attacks took place on 21 July, when a Palestinian terrorist infiltrated the home of the Solomon family in Chalamish and slaughtered three members of the family as they sat together for the traditional Friday night Sabbath meal. This heinous crime was preceded, just a week before, by the killing of two Israeli policemen on the Temple Mount by terrorists who took advantage of Israel's policy of open entry to the Temple Mount, smuggling in weapons and hiding them in the Holy Compound. Using the compound as a staging ground, they attacked and killed the two police officers, desecrating the holy site and turning it into an arena of bloodshed and terror.

"It must be clear that such appalling terrorist attacks do not occur in a vacuum. They are a result of the constant Palestinian incitement to violence and glorification of terror, which are fundamentally incompatible with advancing peace. The incitement starts from the top: Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has publicly endorsed the payment of salaries to convicted terrorists and their families. As part of this incessant incitement to terror, public spaces are regularly named after mass murderers. To name but one timely example, in the West Bank town of Burqa, a youth centre for women was recently named after Dalal Mughrabi, the Palestinian terrorist who, in 1978, led a group of terrorists who hijacked a civilian bus and killed 37 Israelis, including 12 children.

"A clear and unequivocal message must be delivered to the Palestinian leadership: stop encouraging terrorism, stop hate speech and stop educating children to hate. Above all, they must stop offering cash rewards and publicly honouring those who commit acts of terrorism. Such glorification of violence against innocent people and adulation of those who commit these horrific acts are utterly incompatible with the commitment to coexistence and peaceful relations with Israel, which must be at the foundation of a future Palestinian State.

"Israel also believes that a sound and developing Palestinian economy is a prerequisite for stability and security and, as such, is an Israeli interest as well. Despite the ongoing Palestinian violence, Israel is moving ahead with

steps to improve the Palestinian economic situation and the standard of living of the Palestinian population. In this context, the first commercial agreement between the Israel Electric Corporation and the Palestinian Authority was reached recently (10 July 2017) to increase the supply of electricity to Jenin in northern Samaria, to ensure a sufficient supply for the summer months and the entire year.

"Furthermore, on 13 July 2017, it was announced that Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority, through the facilitation of the United States, have reached an agreement, as part of the Red Sea-Dead Sea project, on a large water infrastructure project which will provide billions of gallons of additional water supply for each of the three parties.

"Under the agreement, it is expected that the Palestinian Authority will be able to purchase up to 32 million cubic metres of fresh water from Israel at preferential prices, substantially increasing the amount of water provided to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

"At the same time, Israel is continuing its dialogue with the Palestinian Authority on economic issues. At the end of May, Israeli Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon met with Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah in Ramallah, to brief him on recent steps decided upon by the Israeli Cabinet to improve the economic situation in the Palestinian Authority. Furthermore, the bilateral dialogue between the respective Ministries of Finance has been resumed at the level of Director General of Ministry of Finance.

"In Gaza, Israel is facing a more complex and challenging security and political environment than ever, but is nonetheless undertaking extensive efforts to improve the humanitarian and economic conditions of the people of Gaza, while striving to safeguard the basic and legitimate security needs of Israeli citizens.

"Israel has been continuing to facilitate the reconstruction of Gaza through the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism. Since October 2014, the joint mechanism with the Palestinian Authority and the United Nations has enabled the entry of over 8.2 million tons of various types of construction materials into the Gaza Strip. As of January of this year, 102,331 damaged housing units had been renovated, out of a total of 130,000. More than 11,500 new housing units are in advanced stages of construction, while hundreds are ready for occupancy. Hundreds of public projects, including schools, clinics, mosques and parks, have been completed or are near completion.

"The past year also witnessed an increase of exports from Gaza to the West Bank, Israel and abroad. It is important to note that, last March alone, 372 loads of marketed goods were carried by truck from Gaza, a record total since Hamas took over more than a decade ago. In addition, an aggregate conveyor is currently being built in the Kerem Shalom crossing and is expected to become operational soon. The conveyor is expected to substantially increase the capacity to export goods from the Gaza Strip.

"Unfortunately, alongside these positive developments, the terror organization Hamas continues to steal and confiscate building materials intended for the reconstruction of Gaza and the humanitarian development needs of its residents, and repurpose them for their own military objectives: for the digging and construction of terror tunnels, rearmament and rocket manufacturing. Israel will not tolerate this abuse of the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism or other attempts by Hamas to bolster its terror infrastructure.

"In parallel, there has also been an alarming increase in the number of attempts to smuggle prohibited goods into the Gaza Strip during 2016, including small unmanned aerial vehicles, lasers and military uniforms. During the past year, Israeli security forces thwarted 1,226 such attempts, which constitutes a 165 per cent increase in comparison with 2015.

"The Gaza Strip is suffering from a chronic and acute shortage of energy. The electricity crisis in the Strip is a matter of an internal dispute between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas. Since Hamas's takeover of the Gaza strip in 2007, the Palestinian Authority has been paying the cost of electricity for the Gaza Strip. This year, the Palestinian Authority announced its refusal to continue to make the necessary payments.

"In order to meet all of Gaza's electricity needs, a constant supply of 400 MW is required. Supply from Egypt accounts for 25 MW (6.25 per cent). The power station in Gaza has the capacity to supply 120 MW (about 30 per cent); prior to stopping payment completely, the Palestinian Authority usually purchased only enough fuel to supply 60 MW (about 15 per cent of demand). The Palestinian Authority has been paying Israel for providing for approximately one third of the Gaza Strip's electricity demand (approximately 125 MW). As per the agreement with the Palestinian Authority, this sum of money is deducted from tax revenues that Israel collects for the Palestinian Authority.

"Due to the current dispute between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, the latter has stopped purchasing fuel for the Gaza power station. Therefore, the power station is not producing electricity.

"Furthermore, on April 30, the Palestinian Authority announced that, as of May 22, 2017, it would reduce its payments to Israel for electricity to the Gaza Strip from approximately $11.4 million a month to approximately $7.1 million.

"It must also be emphasized that the reason Hamas refuses to pay its own electricity bill is not for lack of money. Hamas prefers to budget its financial resources to enhance terrorism and terror capabilities, rather than civilian infrastructure that would benefit Gaza residents, such as a steady supply of electricity. Unless and until the Palestinian Authority and Hamas change their policy, significant power shortages are expected to continue, and Gaza's residents will continue to pay the price of the feud between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority.

"Israel is not interested in any escalation of the situation in the Gaza Strip and is making every effort to prevent deterioration in the daily lives of Gaza's residents.

"In addition, Israel is also undertaking efforts to improve the economic situation in the West Bank. Last year, there was a significant increase in the number of truckloads crossing to and from Jordan via the Allenby Bridge. Over 49,000 truckloads filled with goods crossed the bridge — an increase of over 22 per cent compared with 2015.

"The number of people crossing the bridge, the primary crossing point for Palestinians, also set a new record in 2016 at over 2.2 million, most of them Palestinian civilians — an increase of more than 10 per cent compared with 2015.

"As part of the effort to ease access for the Palestinian population, Israel decided to expand the operating hours of the Allenby Bridge. As of 20 June

and through 10 September, the bridge will be open for crossing 24 hours a day, and beginning in 2018, the Allenby Bridge will be open 24/7 all year round.

"The decision to expand the operating hours of the Allenby Bridge is one part of a comprehensive plan to upgrade the crossing, which includes structural improvements, upgraded parking and other measures designed to facilitate ease of travel and increase the commercial activity.

"In this context, it is also important to mention the approval of construction plans to pave roads from the Japanese industrial zone in Jericho to Highway 90 and to Allenby Bridge. The project, funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency, will provide better access for trucks transporting products, manufactured goods and equipment from the Japanese industrial zone in order to promote trade and commerce.

"The aforementioned steps taken by the State of Israel attest to its commitment to a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Israel aspires for peace. It is our sincere hope that creating the environment for enhanced economic activity will encourage the resumption of direct negotiations, leading to the realization of the vision of two nations living side by side, in security and in peace.

"The Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be resolved only through direct bilateral negotiations without preconditions. Attempts to impose solutions or to dictate parameters and timetables will only drive peace further away. Thus, Israel utterly rejects Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). The resolution is unequivocally hostile to Israel and will only make peace harder, not easier, to achieve.

"Finally, it is imperative to reiterate, once again, Israel's right to exist as the nation State of the Jewish people, in peace, with secure borders, and our steadfast opposition to any attempt to undermine Israel's legitimacy. The Palestinian refusal to recognize Israel as a Jewish State — based, inter alia, on a continued denial of any historic Jewish connection to its land — remains one of the main obstacles to peace between Israel and the Palestinians."

II. Observations

7. International efforts to promote the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine continued to focus on the possibility of creating a framework for the parties' return to meaningful negotiations. The Quartet principals met in New York on 23 September 2016, agreeing on the importance of close and continuing coordination of all efforts to achieve the common goal of the two-State solution and reiterating their call on the parties to implement the recommendations of the Quartet Report of 1 July 2016. Quartet envoys also released statements twice in response to heightened tensions on the ground. As they met in Jerusalem on 13 July, they expressed serious concern over the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza. Soon after, on 22 July, in response to the heightened tensions in Jerusalem, they called on all to de-escalate the situation while upholding the status quo at the holy sites.

8. On 23 December 2016, the Security Council adopted its resolution 2334 (2016), in which it reiterated some of the key obstacles to achieving a negotiated two-State solution that had been identified in the report of the Middle East Quartet in July 2016: the continuing policy of settlement construction and expansion; continued acts of violence and terrorism; incitement to violence; and the situation in Gaza. In the resolution, the Council also called on both sides to take steps on the ground to create the conditions for successful final status negotiations.

9. On 15 January 2017, France hosted a conference in Paris at which some 70 countries and international organizations reaffirmed their support for the two-State solution and their readiness to continue encouraging both parties to return to meaningful negotiations. On the same date, the Russian Federation hosted representatives of Palestinian factions in Moscow and stressed the need to overcome divisions so as to create the conditions for meaningful negotiations. On 29 March in Jordan, Arab leaders committed to relaunching peace negotiations and reaffirmed their commitment to the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative. The new United States administration has also focused on efforts to restart negotiations and advance peace.

10. The situation on the ground was characterized by continued tensions, with spikes of violence and a sharp rise in settlement activity in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. A polarized public discourse across the political spectrum in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory continued. Tensions rose in East Jerusalem in July, after an attack in the Old City on 14 July, which left two Israeli police officers and their assailants dead. In response to the attack, Israel installed metal detectors and security cameras at the entrances to the Holy Esplanade, which was immediately condemned by Muslim religious authorities and the Palestinian leadership as unilateral actions violating the historical status quo in the holy sites. Despite international calls for calm, protests and violence erupted after Friday prayers on 21 July, with four Palestinian protesters dying as a result of the response of Israeli security forces. The same night, a Palestinian stabbed to death three members of an Israeli family living in the Israeli settlement of Halamish. The situation eased after Israel withdrew the new security measures; Muslim religious authorities and the Palestinian leadership subsequently instructed worshippers to return to the Al-Aqsa Mosque for prayers.

11. In Gaza, a fragile ceasefire largely held but the situation remained volatile, owing mostly to worsening socioeconomic conditions, delays in reconstruction, continued restrictions on movement and the deepening political divide between the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and the de facto authorities in Gaza.

12. Stabbings, vehicle attacks and shootings by Palestinians targeting Israelis and clashes between Palestinians and the Israeli security forces continued to claim lives. During the reporting period, a total of 73 Palestinians were killed, 38 of whom were perpetrators or alleged perpetrators of attacks, and more than 3,800 Palestinians were injured. Five Israeli civilians and 8 security forces personnel were killed, and at least 176 Israelis, civilians and security forces personnel were injured.

13. The level of force used in countering some of the violence remains a matter of concern. A number of Palestinian fatalities call into question the nature of the response of the Israeli security forces, including the apparent disproportionate use of lethal force. I once again call for necessary precautions to be taken when decisions to use force are made; in particular, live fire should be used only as a last resort, with any resulting death or injury properly investigated. Between October 2015 and March 2017, some 270 Palestinians were killed, nearly 180 of them while carrying out or allegedly carrying out attacks against Israelis. According to the Ministry of Justice, the Israel Defense Forces opened 24 investigations into suspected unlawful use of force, of which only 1 resulted in an 18-month sentence for manslaughter. It is the duty of Israel to ensure a prompt and independent investigation into incidents in which the use of force has resulted in death or injury, and to ensure accountability where there is evidence of wrongdoing.

14. I reiterate the firm condemnation by the United Nations of all terrorist attacks. While the Security Council, in resolution 2334 (2016), called upon both parties to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric, such actions continued. Official media and social media outlets affiliated with Fatah continued to

praise perpetrators of past terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians, while Hamas leaders continued their unacceptable practice of celebrating recent attacks against Israeli civilians as "heroic". Israeli officials have also employed provocative rhetoric and promoted legislation that has the potential to inflame tensions on the ground. Leaders on all sides must stop incitement and consistently and unequivocally stand against acts of terror and violence in all its forms.

15. Throughout the reporting period, the Israel Defense Forces continued to conduct search and arrest operations, while the Palestinian Authority continued to arrest suspected Hamas affiliates in the West Bank. At the end of July, 850 Palestinians were held by Israeli authorities under administrative detention, compared with 700 at the beginning of the reporting period. I am especially concerned about the continued reports of detainees on hunger strikes. On 17 April, an estimated 1,500 Palestinian prisoners and detainees started a hunger strike to protest their conditions in Israeli prisons. Their fast lasted until the start of Ramadan, when some of their requests were met. I reiterate my call to end the practice of administrative detention and to either charge all detainees or immediately release them.

16. At the end of May, Israel held 331 Palestinian children in detention on security grounds. This is down from a peak of 444 cases in March 2016, but double the numbers recorded in May 2015, when 163 children were held in Israeli prisons. All children should be treated with due consideration to their age and may be detained only in situations that are justified under international humanitarian law or applicable human rights norms.

17. After a three-year decline in incidents of settler violence, there has been a noticeable increase in 2017. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 124 such incidents have been documented, resulting in the deaths of 4 Palestinians[1] and the injury of 69, as well as property damage.

18. In resolution 2334 (2016), the Security Council calls on Israel to take steps to cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Instead, settlement activities have risen sharply. During the reporting period, and particularly after the adoption of the resolution, Israeli authorities announced tenders for the construction of some 3,000 housing units in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. In addition, since the beginning of 2017 the Government has approved the advancement of plans for the construction of more than 7,000 units in West Bank settlements. On 1 February, the Government announced its intention to establish a new settlement for the residents of the illegal Amona outpost, following its demolition by order of the Supreme Court of Israel. In late March, the Government declared 241 acres in the West Bank as "State land".

19. On 6 February, the Israeli Parliament approved the so-called Regularization Law, which, if implemented, would permit houses that had been built in settlements on land privately owned by Palestinians to remain in place, while offering the landowners only a choice between compensation through payment and compensation in the form of alternative land. The legal framework created by the law is estimated to have the potential to retroactively "regularize" thousands of housing units and remove significant legal obstacles to the "legalization" of dozens of settlement outposts currently considered illegal by the Government of Israel. The law marks the first time that the Knesset has extended its jurisdiction to matters concerning property of Palestinians living in the West Bank, reflecting a significant shift in the long-standing government position concerning the legal status of the

[1] Two were persons shot by settlers during alleged stabbing and ramming attacks.

territory and the applicability of Israeli law therein. It contravenes international law and, according to the Attorney General of Israel, is unconstitutional.

20. The continued settlement plans, new legislation, retroactive legalizations and official statements signal that the strategic settlement enterprise of Israel continues to expand. In the first seven months of 2017, the number of plans advanced was already 60 per cent higher than the number for all of 2016, with the number of tenders eight times the annual total for that year. Such activities undermine the chances for the establishment of a viable, contiguous Palestinian State as part of a two-State solution. I reiterate that settlements are illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace, and undermine the two-State solution.

21. Demolitions of Palestinian homes in Area C of the occupied West Bank continued, with a significant decline having occurred since February 2017. During the reporting period, 388 structures were demolished, leading to the displacement of some 462 Palestinians, half of them children. In addition, the loss of water wells, solar panels and animal shelters has had an impact on the livelihoods of more than 5,500 people. The Bedouin community in particular is paying a heavy price, with some facing even an imminent threat of being forced to relocate. Unlike in Area C, demolitions in East Jerusalem continued at a fast pace throughout the reporting period, with 155 structures demolished and nearly 300 people displaced as a result. Palestinians require access to a fair planning and zoning regime, so that they do not resort to the building of unauthorized structures that lead to unjustified demolitions, which often have an impact on the most vulnerable people. Demolitions and forcible evictions, carried out when there is no military necessity, contravene international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

22. Also of concern are the continued punitive demolitions of the family homes of Palestinian perpetrators or alleged perpetrators of attacks against Israelis. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has previously reported that punitive home demolitions have an impact on the entire family, constitute a form of collective penalty in breach of article 33 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and breach the obligation of Israel to ensure Palestinians' rights to adequate housing and to freedom from arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy, family or home, and other relevant norms. As an Israeli military committee concluded in 2005, such demolitions are unproven as a deterrent and fuel tension by exacerbating feelings of injustice and hatred.

23. Palestinians continued to advance their State-building programme, although it was limited to the territory under the control of the Palestinian Authority, which excludes Area C, East Jerusalem and Gaza. Despite the progress made in building the governance capacities of the Palestinian Authority, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians remains concerned about its fiscal and economic viability. At its meeting held in Brussels on 4 May, the Committee discussed the key socioeconomic challenges faced by the Palestinian Authority. Regrettably, a number of issues remained unresolved between the parties, including those relating to access and movement, energy, water and fiscal sustainability.

24. I am encouraged that the Israeli and Palestinian Ministers of Finance have since come together to move a number of issues forward, and that they have made progress in discussions on value-added tax clearance revenues. In early June, in accordance with the electricity agreement signed in September 2016, Israel transferred $30 million to the Palestinian Authority in lieu of equalization levies and health stamps and agreed to conduct monthly transfers in the future. The meeting of the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Water Committee held in May (the first such meeting in seven years) and the 13 July agreement for an increase in water supply for

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are positive steps that need to be supported. The signing on 10 July of an interim power-purchasing agreement, which will allow for the first Palestinian-owned and -operated substation in Jenin, is also encouraging.

25. The Middle East Quartet has consistently called on Israel to implement positive and significant policy shifts, particularly in Area C, consistent with the transition to greater Palestinian civil authority contemplated by prior agreements. In May, Israel announced measures designed to help the Palestinian economy in the West Bank, including the proposed reprioritization of the enforcement of zoning laws in parts of Area C adjacent to several Palestinian cities potentially allowing for their residential, industrial and agricultural use; the development of industrial zones in Tarkumiya and Hebron; and the expansion of the hours of operation of the Allenby Bridge crossing into Jordan. I strongly encourage Israel to continue to implement measures of this nature, in order to facilitate sustainable growth and job creation for the Palestinian economy.

26. In February, the Palestinian Authority took a significant step towards strengthening its institutions and improving governance, by finalizing the Palestinian National Policy Agenda: National Priorities, Policies and Policy Interventions (2017-2022), which reiterates its commitment to State-building and guaranteeing the rule of law. In January, the Palestinian Authority approved its general budget for 2017 and, owing to the strong fiscal performance in the previous year, was able to reduce its budget deficit to approximately $580 million. Continued fiscal discipline and a push for revenue growth will be essential, as economic and financial conditions are likely to remain restrictive, in particular given the continued trend of decreasing international support.

27. On 13 May, the Government of the State of Palestine held municipal elections, albeit only in the West Bank. Local elections, if held simultaneously in both Gaza and the West Bank and conducted in line with international standards, can contribute to the advancement of Palestinian reconciliation. Gaza and the West Bank should be reunified under a single, legitimate and democratic Palestinian Authority on the basis of the principles of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the rule of law, in accordance with existing agreements.

28. In Gaza, the humanitarian situation remains dire. Three years after the latest round of hostilities, approximately 25,500 people remain internally displaced and 47 per cent of households are food-insecure or vulnerable to food insecurity. The chronic energy shortage and water deficiencies became even more acute during the reporting period. Movement in and out of Gaza remains extremely limited for its residents, a reality that is particularly harmful to those seeking medical treatment. These conditions exacerbate record-high unemployment rates and chronic aid dependency. In a report released on 11 July, the United Nations country team underscored that most of the projections for 2020 made in an earlier report in which Gaza had been deemed unlivable had come to pass, with conditions deteriorating even further and faster than anticipated.

29. In March, as a result of an internal vote, Hamas elected a new leadership and formed an administrative committee, which was seen by many as a direct challenge to the legitimate Palestinian Government of national consensus. In response, the Palestinian Authority reduced payments to thousands of its employees in the Gaza Strip in April and decided to cap its purchase of electricity from Israel for Gaza, leading Israel to reduce the supply of electricity that it provides to the Strip by some 30 per cent as from 22 June. This cut came in addition to the earlier temporary shutdown of the Gaza power plant, which supplies another 30 per cent of the electricity for Gaza, due to a dispute between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas over the taxation of fuel.

30. At the time of reporting, electricity was unavailable for an average of 20 hours daily in Gaza. Hospitals were forced to postpone elective surgeries and to reduce cleaning, catering and sterilization services by 80 per cent. Desalination plants were functioning at 15 per cent of capacity, and the majority of Palestinians in Gaza received water for only a few hours every three to four days. As much as 100,000 cubic metres of raw sewage was discharged into the Mediterranean Sea on a daily basis. As at 21 June, Egypt had facilitated the entry of fuel that allowed the Gaza power plant to be brought back into use. I welcome the support provided by Egypt to the people of Gaza at a moment of need. In addition, the United Nations is providing nearly 900,000 litres of emergency fuel per month for critical health, water and waste management infrastructure. These measures provide a temporary lifeline to the residents of Gaza, but they are not sustainable solutions. The parties must come to a sustainable agreement, or the population of Gaza will continue to suffer.

31. I also welcome the decision by Egypt to open the Rafah crossing for travellers on 43 occasions and its ongoing steps to facilitate more frequent and predictable openings of the crossing, while respecting the legitimate security concerns of Egypt with regard to the Sinai Peninsula.

32. Despite persistent security and governance challenges and funding shortages, the reconstruction process in Gaza has continued. Three years after the escalation of hostilities, almost all damaged or destroyed schools, hospitals and water and energy facilities have been or are being repaired or rebuilt. While significant progress has also been made on housing, nearly 3,800 totally destroyed homes and more than 57,000 damaged homes have yet to be reconstructed or repaired. Complete reconstruction is within sight but requires that donors fulfil their funding commitments. A large funding gap with respect to the rehabilitation of productive sectors in Gaza also inhibits recovery, and I strongly encourage all Member States to fulfil their commitments to support the reconstruction and development of Gaza. The temporary Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism has allowed much of this reconstruction to take place. I reiterate that the Mechanism was designed as a temporary measure and that the ultimate objective of the United Nations in Gaza continues to be the lifting of all closures within the framework of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and in a manner that addresses the legitimate security concerns of Israel.

33. The 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan, which is aimed at addressing the humanitarian needs of 2 million Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, requests $552 million. This represents a 3 per cent reduction compared with 2016, but remains elevated owing largely to the significant humanitarian needs in Gaza. In July, the humanitarian country team issued a new $25 million appeal in response to the energy crisis. The appeal highlights key unfunded projects, along with a few new interventions that have been added to address the changing humanitarian context. I strongly encourage all Member States that have not done so to fulfil their commitments without delay.

34. I remain concerned that limited crossing capacity and a range of other restrictions, along with a lack of Palestinian unity, mean that significant improvement in the humanitarian situation and overall economy of Gaza remains unlikely. In that context, the risk of violent escalation remains ever present in Gaza as underlying causes of previous conflicts remain unaddressed. The effects of these persistent pressures on security continue to be felt. As at 23 August, Palestinian militants in Gaza had fired a total of 23 rockets at Israel, 14 of which had impacted Israel, none of them causing injuries. The Israel Defense Forces had reportedly responded with a total of 27 air strikes in Gaza, causing injuries to three Palestinians. I call on all Palestinian factions to ensure respect for international law

and not to engage in activities that risk destabilizing the situation and the reconstruction process. Similarly, I call on Israel to ensure that any military actions comply with the principles of distinction, proportionality and military necessity.

35. Lasting progress in Gaza can be realized only on the basis of Palestinian unity, an end to the illicit arms build-up and militant activities, and a full lifting of movement and access restrictions in line with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

36. I remain worried about the state of human rights and freedoms in Gaza. Of particular concern are reports of arbitrary detention and ill-treatment in detention centres. On 3 April and 3 May, Hamas carried out six executions of Palestinians, bringing to 28 the number of death sentences carried out since its takeover in 2007. I condemned those actions and remain deeply concerned that further executions are anticipated. I call on the de facto authorities to refrain from carrying out further executions. I also urge the Palestinian Authority to fulfil its responsibilities with full respect for international human rights law.

37. The Palestinian Government of national consensus must be empowered and enabled to assume its rightful responsibilities in Gaza, including in particular at the crossings with Israel and Egypt. I strongly urge Palestinian factions to advance genuine Palestinian unity on the basis of democracy and the Palestinian Liberation Organization and Quartet principles. Genuine unity will also improve the ability of the Palestinian Government to meet the pressing economic problems that are adding to the frustration and anger of Palestinians. The United Nations stands ready to support all efforts in that direction.

38. I remain seriously concerned about the lack of political progress and the high risk of further violence and radicalization. The 50-year anniversary of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the occupation of the Palestinian territory is a stark reminder: for too long, leaders on both sides have failed to take the difficult steps needed for peace. There is no alternative to the two-State solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The proponents of the status quo and the critics of the two-State solution offer no viable alternative that meets the legitimate aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians.

39. The report of the Middle East Quartet and Security Council resolutions have clearly outlined what is needed for the advancement of a sustainable and just peace. Israel can take the necessary steps to stop settlement expansion and construction in order to preserve this prospect, while the Palestinian leadership can demonstrate its commitment to tackling the challenges of violence and incitement on its side. This will create an environment that will facilitate bilateral final status negotiations that the international community can support. We remain resolute in our commitment to help Palestinians and Israelis overcome these challenges.

40. I would like to express my deep appreciation to the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, for his outstanding service in what remains a challenging context. I am also most grateful to the Commissioner General of UNRWA, Pierre Krähenbühl, for his unwavering commitment and the remarkable work carried out by his staff for Palestinian refugees. In addition, I pay tribute to all staff who work under difficult, and at times dangerous, circumstances in the service of the United Nations.

41. I will continue to ensure that the United Nations works towards the establishment of an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace with a secure Israel in the framework of a comprehensive regional settlement consistent with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), 1860 (2009) and 2334 (2016) and in accordance with the Quartet road map, the Arab Peace Initiative, the Quartet report and the principle of land for peace.